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Madame de Staël
From a copper print by Marceau

Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant

Unpublished Letters

Together with other Mementos from the Papers left by Mme. Charlotte de Constant

Edited by Mme. de Constant's Great-Granddaughter
Baroness Elisabeth de Nolde

Translated from the French by
Charlotte Harwood

G. P. Putnam's Sons
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1907

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

À MARIA-PIA FABBRICOTTI

Ne vous récriez pas, chère comtesse, si je vous tends encore une fois ces feuillets. Ils ne vous empêcheront plus de gouter dans votre bien aimé fauteuil la pleine béatitude du "dolce far niente."

Sans même ouvrir ce volume, veuillez lui offrir un petit coin entre vos autres livres, et accepter mes remerciements pour l'aimable aide que vous avez bien voulu me prêter.

Elisabeth de Nolde.

Florence, Villa Curonia,
May 1, 1907.

205123

I HASTEN to name here, while according them my thanks, those persons who have been interested in these letters. Mlle. Dora Melegari, from whose interesting work I have quoted many times [1]; Lady Blennerhasset,[2] whose fine *Life of Mme. de Staël*, and remarkable study of the circle she lived in, have been a great resource; M. Philippe Godet, Professor of Literature at Neuchâtel; M. Eugène Ritter, Professor at the University of Geneva; M. Antoine Guiller, Member of the Historical Society of Auteuil, and M. G. Rudler, Professor at the College of Caen (Calvados), who have given me useful information.

My cordial thanks are due also to M. le Docteur Hermann Herre, who was particu-

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[1] *Journal Intime de Benjamin Constant.* By Dora Melegari. Paris: P. Ollendorff, publisher, 1895.

[2] *Frau von Staël, ihre Freunde und ihre Bedentung,* von Lady Blennerhasset geb. Gräfin Leyden Berlin Gebrüder Paetel, 1887.

larly efficacious in assisting me with the classification of another collection of love-letters addressed to Benjamin Constant, the publication of which will follow this volume; and to Baron de Marenholtz-Gross-Schwülper, who put his family archives at my disposal.

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From a copper print by Marceau.

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Letters of Mme. de Staël to Benjamin Constant

I

ON the 22d July, 1845, there died in Paris the widow of Benjamin Constant—an old lady who had lived a very retired life—an uninteresting woman, whose name, however, has often been mentioned, not without bringing a smile to the lips that spoke it.

There are some beings so good that they are never taken seriously; who are so gentle and forgiving that these supreme qualities harm them in the eyes of the world. Charlotte de Constant, *née* Hardenberg, belonged in this category. The life of this woman who smiled, and caused others to smile,

so often, had been active enough. The dearly loved wife of three husbands, she had always managed to be treated indulgently, and to retain the sympathy of a discarded husband when her fancy had wandered to another. A faithful and affectionate friend, she made life agreeable to herself and her circle, without paying too much attention to the little troubles of this world.

She left her first husband, the Baron de Marenholtz, and with him a son—the only child she ever had,—to marry, the Vicomte du Tertre, a French general who had captured her affections.

The deputy and publicist Pagès, who collaborated with Benjamin Constant on the paper *La Minerve*, and who replaced him for the reports of the Chamber of Deputies on the same gazette, when Constant became a deputy himself, and who was a friend of Mme. Constant, as he had been of her husband, wrote to her in 1835: "You are like the swallows who no longer recognise their

Madame Charlotte de Constant, née Comtesse Hardenberg
From the pastel in the possession of Baron de Marenholtz

children when they have driven them from the nest. You need another kind of affection, and if you love your son, it is as a mistress does. You love him because he is handsome, because he has good manners, and is successful with women. But God forgive me, you have never thought of loving him for the good reason that you are his Mother. I do not know in what mould you were formed, but as I have never seen any one who resembles you, I imagine that the mould is broken."[1]

In her latter years, this charming little old lady, who wrote verses, received her friends leaning on the bust of her last husband. He was her veritable *enfant terrible*, and she loved him as only such children are loved; she even tried once, in the current fashion, to die of despair because of the infidelities of this most inconstant of Constants—oh no! there was nothing to get excited about—a little dose of poison, that,

[1] Letter of M. Pagès to Mme. Benjamin Constant, found in the Archives of Baron de Marenholtz-Gross-Schwülper in Hanover.

naturally, could have no serious consequences.

This descendant of a superior race, though perhaps she could not intellectually claim superiority, knew how to show great courage on occasion. During a journey that they made together to Saumur, in October, 1820, a year after Benjamin Constant had been elected deputy from the Sarthe, the pupils of a riding school—ultra-royalist officers, bitter enemies of the liberals and their great orator—went in arms to the house, where several friends had met to do honour to their illustrious guest. The crowd, which had gathered to see the famous liberal deputy, greeted them with howls. The new-comers, roused to a high pitch of excitement, drew on the defenceless crowd, wounded several people, and tried to force the doors, crying "Death to Benjamin Constant! We will have his head!" Cries of "To arms!" were heard in the distance. The meeting was greatly alarmed, and only Constant retained his accustomed calm. "Madame Constant," says the narrator of this story, "whose great

soul was so well suited to her husband's, pressing my arm, exclaimed, with an accent I shall never forget: 'No, Monsieur, my husband cannot fly in so shameful a manner [It had been suggested that he should escape by the garden wall]. Whatever happens, he must remain here.'"

Atavism, race traditions, must have prompted this attitude. The descendant of an ancient noble family, this answer was but the result of innate pride, that caused her only to pale in the face of danger, while a woman of the people would have emitted piercing cries. But this was not the sole occasion on which she showed courage. Did she not propose several times to rejoin her husband in Paris, when she was in Germany? She would have had to make a long journey alone, day and night, on the highroads which were not at all safe, a heroic act, in the days when ladies fainted at the slightest opportunity. A question of nerves? And when a woman resolves to pass as the mistress of the man whose lawful wife she

is, so that her rival may have time to regard the situation less bitterly, must one not be astonished at the moral courage that can brave the judgment of the world for such a reason?

Great periods create strange types. Few epochs have witnessed such a curious mingling of sentimentality and heroism as did the periods of the French Revolution and the Empire. But "Où sont les neiges d'antan?" Where are the round and rosy faces of our grandmothers, so good and kind; gracious old ladies perfumed with lavender, with lovely silver ringlets, and the large lace and net caps, which, like aureoles, surrounded these sentimental faces of the past century?

Alas! the white cap was the cause of Charlotte Constant's death. She went too near a light, and it caught fire; in her terror she ran down-stairs calling for help; the current of air fanned the flames, and when they were finally extinguished, she was so badly burned that she succumbed shortly after.

Her son by her first marriage, M. de Marenholtz—no longer young himself, and at that time Grand Marshal and intimate counsellor of the King of Hanover—hastened from the farther end of Germany at the news of this terrible accident, to see once more the mother with whom he had passed a great part of his youth, and whom he loved tenderly. He brought his son with him—my father—and it was they who, with other souvenirs of value and interest, brought away Mme. Constant's papers, from among which we have chosen the following letters, believing that they have a certain interest.

They lay for a long time buried in the family archives. After the death of my father (Charlotte's grandson) my mother, the only survivor of a generation that had known M. and Mme. Constant, preserved them carefully, and from her lips I gathered several of these reminiscences.

II

HOW did Mme. de Staël's letters come into the hands of Mme. Constant? We do not know. Is it this correspondence that is spoken of in a letter from Benjamin Constant to Mme. Récamier, written in 1828?

"I called on you, Madame, with Mme. B. Constant, but you were out. I have tried twice to find you before my departure, but with no greater luck. If I knew when it would be least tiresome to you, I would try again.

"I should like also to ask you to enlighten me on a subject of which I have always forgotten to speak to you, though it is an old one. I hope that you have not lost all memory of it. Before my return to Paris in 1817, I took the liberty of asking you to remove some papers from a trunk, something that I had written *at a time when I was very unhappy*, and that I did not wish others to see. You were so kind as to do this. In

Benjamin Constant
From the painting in the possession of Baron de Marenholtz

this trunk were some letters from our friend[1] that ought not to be seen by any one. Did I not ask you to remove them also? The fact is, I have not found them.[2]

"Since the sad death of poor Auguste[3] I have wanted these letters, in order to show parts of them to the Duc de Broglie and his wife.[4] Be good enough to tell me if you have them. . . ."

On Benjamin Constant's death, Mme. de Staël's daughter, the Duchesse de Broglie, did all she possibly could to obtain possession of what remained of her mother's correspondence with the celebrated orator. They endeavoured to efface all memory of what her mother had always proclaimed perhaps too loudly.

[1] Mme. de Staël.

[2] We see in the letters of Benjamin Constant to Mme. Récamier, published by the author of the souvenirs of Mme. Récamier, Paris, Calmann Lévy, page 331, that his memory is at fault. He had only asked her to take out the letters she had written in answer to his, which were in a trunk at his house. He feared a visit from the police, and wished to spare Mme. Récamier, although her letters were purely platonic, the annoyance of having them fall under any other eyes.

[3] Son of Mme. de Staël.

[4] Mme. de Staël's daughter, Albertine.

The Comte d' Haussonville informs us that no letter of Benjamin Constant is to be found in the archives of the heirs; it would seem, then, that they have all, unfortunately, been destroyed.

That such precautions—very comprehensible and praiseworthy at the time—were taken long ago, is shown in a letter from the Duchesse de Broglie to M. Charles de Constant:

"PARIS, 17th January, 1831.[1]

"I believe that you know from Mme. Constant, Monsieur, the applications that I have caused to be made to her, not having the advantage of seeing her myself. I do not think you should attribute her silence to anything else than her grief and dejection, which, I hear, are very great.

"I am happy to do anything that is agreeable to you. I have long wanted to express the interest that I take in all that concerns you. Now, I write confidentially to request something of you. There should be in

[1] *Letters of Benjamin Constant to his Family*, J. H. Menos, p. 66. Paris: Albert Savine.

Lausanne, a box of M. Benjamin Constant's papers, which contains, perhaps, my mother's letters. I have a paper from M. Constant, ordering all these letters to be returned to me. I ask you as a friend [*sic*] to find out in whose hands this box now is, if I can be confident that it is safe from all indiscretion, and that M. Constant's wishes will be regarded? Mlle. Rosalie[1] has perhaps some ideas on the subject. I do not know if M. Constant has any other near relations at Lausanne. If you know of any other place where one could find papers of M. Constant, you would do me a pleasure by informing me of it. I beg you not to mention the subject of this letter to any one. I am confident that you will not find me indiscreet.

"I greatly regretted not seeing you during my stay at Coppet. My husband sends his kind remembrances. Good-bye, Monsieur; accept the assurance of my feeling of highest consideration, and deep sympathy.

"STAËL DE BROGLIE."

[1] A cousin of Benjamin Constant.

M. J. H. Menos says: "What the Duchesse de Broglie so anxiously demanded was delivered to her. The box of which Mme. de Constant speaks had been left in Hanover in 1819, and sent thence to Lausanne in 1826, when Benjamin planned a stay in Switzerland. It contained, besides other papers, Mme. de Staël's letters."

Another series of letters might have been in question, however; we cannot be certain of it, but is it not possible that the letters we now give to the public are other than those claimed by the Duchess? An order from Mme. de Constant had anticipated the Duchess's demand.

Letter from Madame de Constant to Rosalie de Constant [1]

"PARIS, 6 January 1831.

"DEAR KIND COUSIN:

"I am writing you just a few words, today, to tell you that I owe some quieter moments to your letter. It contains so much friendship for my poor Benjamin, so

[1] *Letters of Benjamin Constant to his Family*, J. H. Menos, p. 65. Paris: Albert Savine, publisher.

much knowledge of his noble character, and loving and tortured heart, so much indulgence for that need of agitation, precisely because it was inseparable as much from the desire of liberty, as from horror of all oppression. . . . I beg you particularly to retain the care of the box committed to your charge, which contains papers that ought not to fall into any one's hands. . . ."

If the box had not been reopened, these letters could not be in question, for we have some of 1815 and 1816. But however it may be, the fact is that those we possess happily escaped destruction, and we have no scruple in publishing them, for, although considered as "compromising," they are not at all so, and they only add to the interest felt for their author.

Oblivion only too soon covers with the shadow of the past those who were illustrious in their century. It is fortunate when, after the lapse of years, we can resuscitate, for the benefit of younger generations, the pulsing life of exceptional men or women. Their

vanishing figures become distinct again. Renown is like the movement of the waves, and one may say that the names of Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant are, at the present moment, more before the public than they were fifty years ago.

Several fine works have lately been published on Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant, and others are about to appear. Nearly a century has elapsed since their deaths and after the publication of the journal of Benjamin Constant, we do not consider it an indiscretion, either as regards Mme. de Staël or her descendants, to make these letters public.

Must one always smile in hearing a liaison spoken of, or regret the indiscretion committed when the details are published? A love that weakens, and sometimes, alas! destroys genius, should be punished by oblivion; but there is another love that is worthy to live by remembrance, because without it, perhaps, genius would not have flown so high. It is a necessity with some

natures, to find beings whose intelligent understanding permits them to pour forth their over-full souls. To bow to convention, to restrain an unquenched thirst for happiness, is sometimes more fatal to genius than to give way to its inclinations.

Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant differed on every point, but one was the necessary complement to the impetuous creative genius of the other. The historian Sismondi—an habitué of Coppet, and intimate friend of both—wrote:

"No one really knew Mme. de Staël who had not seen her with Benjamin Constant, for his intellectual individuality alone had the power to bring out the entire value of hers. But he also was only thoroughly himself at Coppet. When I saw him again, after the death of Mme. de Staël, spiritually extinguished, I had difficulty in recognising him."

According to Sismondi, then, posterity would have to resign itself to not knowing

entirely the most intelligent woman, and one of the most intellectual men of the time, if unhappily, nothing had been preserved regarding their intimate relations.

Their youth and surrounding influences had been very different; their natures were diverse, and if keen psychologists had not been greatly interested in the bonds that drew them together, we should ask ourselves in astonishment, to-day, what had bound these two minds to each other. These letters will help us to understand; but as they were written for the most part after the rupture between Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant at the time of his marriage, we have thought it better to preface them with a short account, less of the already well-known lives of each, than of the different phases of their intimate relations.

III

ANNE Louise Germaine de Necker was born in Paris on April 22, 1766. She was brought up by a mother who possessed all the excellent qualities of a Swiss governess. A blue-stocking by origin, Mme. Necker received in her hospitable house the cream of the intellect of Voltaire's century, without being for a moment unsettled by his narrow convictions. She belonged to that class of women whose perfection is irritating to ordinary mortals...

M. Necker, a pedant according to the code that directed his actions, but more humanely liberal in thought, and endowed with great kindness of heart, was an ideal father, to whom his wife, and his daughter, from her earliest infancy, had vowed the deepest veneration—so great that it has almost

harmed him with posterity by inviting contradiction.

The peaceful family life created for Anne Germaine a homogeneous and harmonious society, a solid foundation which contributed, with training, to strengthen a nature wonderfully endowed, and to create a character of admirable firmness. This character, still further developed by the education that was lavished on her, gave her the strength to retain unshaken fidelity to the principles of liberty and to the "rights of man," and through all the vicissitudes that these ideas involved her in she never wavered. The theories she had heard from so many eloquent lips at an early age had penetrated to the depths of her heart, and if it has been claimed that towards the end of her life her convictions were shaken by her desire to return to France, and above all Paris, many passages in the letters we now publish will serve to refute this assertion.

When quite young she shone in the society that frequented the Neckers by her

Anne Louise Necker, Baroness de Staël-Holstein

From a copper print by Pinelli

wit, and a pretty gift of writing which earned her the name, even in infancy, of "Mlle. de St. Écritoire."

Her father's fortunes made her an eligible *parti*, and William Pitt and the Baron Staël de Holstein solicited her hand simultaneously. The latter was the fortunate man, not because of his deserts, but because he offered his future wife the title of Ambassadress, and residence in Paris; and it was due to the Neckers, of whom the King of Sweden, Gustav, had retained pleasant recollections since his visit to France, that M. de Staël, who was not *persona grata* to his sovereign, succeeded in being named Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of France.

Some days after her marriage, which took place in the Chapel of the Swedish Embassy, the young Baroness de Staël was presented at Court (February, 1786). Her favour was short, however, and was not even re-established during the triumphs of Necker, in which she took so enthusiastic a part.

Talleyrand maintained that only those who lived before 1789 knew the charm of existence. It was then that Constant—quite a young man—came also to Paris, and made his début in the life of the capital.

His youth and training had been very different from those of his future friend. His birth (11 November, 1767) had been the cause of his mother's death. Brought up alternately by a brusque, ironical, cold, and timid father, and a grandmother who spoiled him utterly, he was confided to unfit tutors; at one time rubbed painfully, at another, over-praised; for his intellectual faculties, developed to an extraordinary degree, made all study easy, and caused him to be universally admired. The letters he wrote to his grandmother and cousin at the age of ten are unique from the point of view of deplorable precocity of development.

He spent several years at a school in Germany, where he indulged in all possible and imaginable pranks, and was then sent to

the University of Edinburgh, where twenty years later his wild doings were still remembered. Returning to France, he came to Paris. He was an accomplished fop; a pretty fellow, an immoderate gambler, and gad-about of the highest order, always ready for a duel on the slightest pretext, and, thanks to his desultory education, a cosmopolite believing neither in God nor Devil. We shall see this cosmopolitanism and lack of principle rising in reproach before a man who, almost all his life, worked for the good and the liberty of the French people.

Many thoughtful minds, however, doubted his sincerity. "You are not a Frenchman, Benjamin—you are not attached to these surroundings by all the recollections of childhood—that is the difference between you and me," wrote his devoted friend twenty-five years later.[1]

They were both of them Swiss, in fact,

[1] Extract from a letter of Mme. de Staël to Benjamin Constant in 1814, published elsewhere in this volume.

for Benjamin was descended from the Barons Constant de Rebecque, a family of the Reformed faith, that had quitted France in 1607, and after passing through Holland had established themselves, and become naturalised, in Switzerland. This origin, with their religion, was their only point of resemblance.

It seems useless to conjecture what Constant would have become if his nature had developed under other auspices; perhaps a very insignificant person who would have made us repeat the words of his friend: "Return, return, with all your weakness, your vacillation, and your singularities. If you were to lose any of them, I should no longer know you, I should not have the same confidence, nor the same pleasure."

But can one imagine two souls less prepared to love each other, if one does not believe that extremes meet? It was not, in fact, until much later that these poles must have drawn together.

The Ambassadress had just formed her

circle, and immediately, her salon was distinguished among its brilliant fellows. How was it that she played a part so early? "It was not that she was so beautiful," but that she was twenty, had the blackest and most expressive eyes imaginable, fine arms, and beautiful hands,—that she was intelligent and her conversation extraordinarily piquant. A good position, and the large fortune that she and M. de Staël spent in emulation of each other, brought all Paris hurrying to her door.

Did Constant know her? If by chance, like his cousin Rosalie, he had not met her in youth, during his frequent visits in Switzerland, would he have been in Paris without calling on the Neckers, compatriots and Calvinists like himself, in the same social sphere, friends of his relations and acquaintances in Lausanne and Geneva? A young man desirous of entering the fashionable world would not have neglected such a good means of introduction to it. He must surely have met the Ambassadress at Mme. de Charrière's and in many other salons.

Allowing ourselves to be carried away by this hypothesis, and by several other considerations, we were led to believe that not only are the following letters Mme. de Staël's, but also all those that were found in the same parcel, separated from the other papers, and inscribed, "Letters of Mme. de Staël," notably certain missives in a disguised handwriting, and those that follow them.

When we began to classify the papers that came into our hands, it was a question of sorting out hundreds of large and small pages, some of which were torn, and some crumpled up. Only about twenty of these letters were dated; some were written in pencil, some in ink, and many of the words had become illegible. We gave the date 1792 to a letter the contents of which seemed in every respect to relate to the period of the assassination of the King of Sweden. A letter bearing the date 1820 was marked 1800, because the figures were nearly effaced.

The allusions relating to the Deputy, etc.,

were applied to the epoch when Benjamin Constant sat in the Tribunal. We gathered from this that the anonymous correspondence, and the first meeting of the two, took place when Benjamin first came to Paris, and we explained the contradictions which arose between the letters themselves and the *Journal Intime* by an arrangement between them, made in order to keep the beginning of their intimacy secret. We imagined that there had been an interruption in their relations, caused by the troubles of the Revolution, and that their so-called first meeting on the road from Coppet to Lausanne (September, 1794) was only a renewal of acquaintance. In short, our hypothesis played us false.

I had shown our estimate of things, still very vague, to several persons, among others Mlle. Dora Melegari, who was kind enough to take the liveliest interest in our work, and, apropos of it, published in the *Journal de Genève* an article which announced our discovery and explained our supposition.

As we advanced in our work, contradictions arose at every step; reminding us of the words of Benjamin Constant relative to the facts he collected in his youth in support of the thesis for his great book *On Religions*, which served perfectly, at the end of his life, to establish contrary opinions: "Nothing like an idea on which one has begun to embroider; one no longer doubts its authenticity: every fact seems to come to its support."

The very day that Mlle. D. Melegari's article was to appear in the *Journal de Genève*, everything was cleared up. We found that a great number of the love letters—that is to say, the anonymous ones and those following them—could not be Mme. de Staël's. All our hesitations, doubts, and the incomprehensible contradictions were explained by the simple fact that a large number of the letters were not, and could not be, by Mme. de Staël, and that those whose authenticity was beyond doubt are those that are published here.

I wrote immediately to Mlle. Melegari; but it was too late; the article had just appeared [1] and we have been reduced to giving an explanation here. If Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant knew each other earlier, it could only have been a passing acquaintanceship that left no trace.

The heart of each was otherwise occupied. The young Ambassadress, known to be slightly eccentric, was soon suspected of ideas too liberal and progressive to be welcome at Court; and she found herself exposed to bitter criticism. Slightly scandalous stories were circulated about her—not, perhaps, without some foundation for what the society of the *ancien régime* whispered about her love affairs. Married to a man below her in attainments, she sought consolation for the emptiness of her private life. The rumours even reached Sweden, and did not increase the sympathy

[1] *Journal de Genève*, Nos. 21 November, 5 December, and 12 December, 1904, "Lettres inédites de Mme. de Staël," par Dora Melegari.

of the King for his Ambassador. This monarch seems always to have paid more attention to innumerable chance correspondents, than to the official reports of his ministers, and according to what was said, some of them were not very favourable to the Staëls.

The Comte de Fersen, that romantic figure of a chevalier of the middle ages, faithful and devoted to "his most gracious Lady," his unhappy Queen by election, Marie Antoinette, was one of the principal bearers of gossip about them. He was the echo, at the Court of his Sovereign, of the unfriendly feelings of the Court of France and its Sovereign.

Later on, incapable in her generosity of pronouncing the *væ victis*, which caused many others to abandon the tottering power, Mme. de Staël, who had shown herself less eager than the rest of the world to accept the Sovereign's favours, published (1793) *Les réflexions sur le procès de la Reine.* The vibrating and passionate appeal that she made—vainly, alas!—to the conscience of a

people loosed from all restraints, and to the hearts of all French women, proves the absolute sincerity and disinterestedness of the promptings of her heart. By this publication she fearlessly risked her future safety for one who in former days had shown her but small kindness.

Benjamin did not, perhaps, attract Mme. de Staël's attention. He was only a young scatterbrain, with the manners of a Werther, who united the refinement of an ancient Don Juan with the appearance of a young German student. He was paying assiduous attention to a Mlle. Pourat, an extremely rich young woman, who had the prudence to keep her fortune to herself, and not trust it to this sieve. He himself tells that he managed this affair so foolishly that, quite naturally, the young lady turned from him, and showed him the door most politely, as M. Godet says.

His father's repeated admonitions to put an end to his irregularities and accept a post as chamberlain at Brunswick; the railleries that one who was later on less

cruel (Mme. de Charrière) opposed to his exuberant assurances of friendship; a little *Weltschmerz*, very much in fashion then, —in short, a disgust with existence in Paris in general, and with his own in particular, led him to attempt his life. The poison had the usual results; he escaped with a little sickness of the stomach, for which he was amply rewarded by the interest he had aroused among his friends.

One fine day, without saying a word, he packed up his things—or rather, to speak the truth, he left them unpacked—and quitted Paris. "To live without a country and the woman I love—as well live without a shirt, and without money, as I am actually doing! I start at once for London. I have two or three friends there, among others one to whom I lent a great deal of money in Switzerland, who will I hope do me the same service in London.

"Do not disturb yourself about my situation. It amuses me as if it were another's. I laugh for hours at this complication of

extravagances, and when I look in the glass I say, 'Ah Benjamin, Benjamin!' My family will scold me well for having forgotten the 'de,' and the 'Rebecque'; but I would sell them at present 'three pence a piece'!"[1]

Sure of finding helpful acquaintances of the glad days of old, he remained some weeks in England, scouring the country on foot and on horseback, and in all imaginable ways. He went forty to fifty miles a day without any object: "I make long journeys through economy and impatience. But one gets tired of tiring oneself, as one does of resting," he said in a letter to Mme. de Charrière.[2]

In the archives of the national library of Florence we found a letter from his father to M. Gand, who was in the Dutch service, and we think it interesting by reason of the insight it gives us into the state of that country, and of the manner in which M. Constant the elder took his son's escapade.

[1] "Lettres de Benjamin Constant à Mme. de Charrière," *Revue des deux Mondes*, 15 April, 1844, E. H. Gaulieur.

[2] *Revue des deux Mondes*, 1844.

Letter of M. Constant, the elder, to M. Gand

"MONSIEUR:

"I have had news of my son, who left Paris with some English people, who took him to London. He tells me that he will soon follow his letter, and I believe that he is now at The Hague. As he does not ask for any money, I do not doubt his return, and things are not perhaps as bad as I feared. It is a very giddy head that will yet cause me much uneasiness.

"As soon as he joins me we shall start for Switzerland. My first care, Monsieur, will be to send you the sum total of all the advances you have been kind enough to make me; I beg you to kindly give me this further proof of friendship; I can do nothing here: there is neither money, nor papers, nor bankers who do business in France. If I can, I will pass through Paris, to arrange all arrears, but I can hardly be there before the end of August. If I go, which I doubt, in this case, let me again tell you how much I feel all the marks of friendship I have received

from your house. I owe to you all the pleasure of my stay in Paris, and the moments that I have passed at your house, and with you, were certainly the most agreeable, and the most interesting.

"There is positive news of the march of the Prussian troops. General Gaudy must be in command of 40,000 men; already two corps have been traced, one near [illegible] and the other at Cravenburg. All is in motion in the Cleves country. This news, that cannot be contradicted, causes lively sensations here, and there is no other course than to give the King of Prussia the satisfaction he demands, or to throw oneself into the arms of France; but the Prussian troops might be in the heart of Holland (Revolutions have taken place), before yours were ready to oppose them.

"The six provinces have declared that they would take no part in this war, and that the Province of Holland must get out of the trouble the best way she can. The Province has only her burgher armies for her defence;

all the troops, rather than break their oath, abandoned her on her repartition. In spite of all appearances, I am sure that your Court will find means to stop the King of Prussia, and that his troops will not fire a single shot. You can have no idea of the disorder and confusion of this province; there is no longer regency nor magistrates; the burgher armies command, and have their orders executed, with fixed bayonets; it is a frenzy of which one can form no idea at a distance.

"I beg Mme. Gand to accept my humble respects; I shall long keep a remembrance of all her kindness; and you, Monsieur, do justice to my sentiments, and to the distinguished consideration with which I have the honour to be,

"Monsieur, your very humble and obedient servant,

"CONSTANT DE REBECQUE.

"BOIS LE DUC, 13 July, 1787."

Benjamin, who in his youth had given his father much trouble, changed places with him later on, and relieved him of serious

embarrassment several times. To avoid going to Brunswick, he thought of sailing for America, but ended by going to Switzerland, where his father received him rather coldly.

Shortly after, he appeared at Colombier, at the door of Mme. de Charrière, a very witty Dutch authoress. He rested there from his follies while sketching out an idyll, that became too intimate and lasted too long to avoid causing anxiety to his parents, and drawing down renewed reproaches from his father, who persuaded him, at last, to accept the post at Brunswick.

Weak natures are generally attracted by strong ones. As Benjamin, later on, found his complement in the virile character of Mme. de Staël, who was, as Sainte-Beuve says, "his male," this time also he had attached himself to a woman who was not only twenty years older than he, but of so masculine a type that at the first glance at her portrait one wonders if it is a woman or a man.

It has always been said that the love of

Benjamin Constant was but an effervescence of the imagination, that the hoped-for happiness was not obtained; that women had no attraction for him but curiosity; that he was incapable of loving truly. Did he not, then, really love Mme. de Charrière, nor Mme. de Staël, nor Mme. Récamier, nor the "Unknown" whose letters we shall examine later on? Did he merely have great infatuations of extraordinary violence, of which he soon tired, and that he would soon have broken off had not his weakness of character and the kindness that so often accompanies it, together with a dread of giving pain, led him to play a most painful rôle, painful to himself who could not succeed in breaking the ties, and to her who, strange as it may seem, had become unalterably attached to him? And why did women remain so faithful to him? What was the charm that kept them so? Was it his intellect? Has intellect ever been love's motive? Does the faithful love of twenty years always give the woman who has been its object, the feeling that she has

been happy? The world will boast of her happiness, but she herself may judge differently. Who knows whether the love of this good man—whom she has loved—has left her satisfied, and whether he has been able to respond entirely to her desire for happiness, as the love of a day might have done? As in everything, it is the quality that matters; but it is no less true that, in love, most human beings only appreciate the duration of the attachment, and from this point of view the world in general blames Benjamin Constant.

And yet this man, whose perspicacity penetrated to the depths of the soul, and who on occasion united a most violent passion to this acuteness, must have left in the hearts of the women who loved him the remembrance of a happiness that few men would have been able to imprint. The woman, in consequence, remained attached to him for ever, for he had laid hold on all her being, and satisfied everything in her. Mediocre happiness holds the possibility of continuation, but we cannot expect to prolong a rare

and precious joy that has crowned all our desires. Great heights are not made to dwell on, and great passions cannot last long.

Mme. Récamier did not love him, so she does not count. Mme. du Charrière, it seems, was the only one of his mistresses who had no illusions about him. She yielded to his charm, because she was so completely disillusioned about everything that she had the courage to say to herself, "Let us take the little life offers, without asking of it joys that few men know how to give, and none to maintain." She enjoyed it intensely; she perverted and hardened still more, if possible, this mocking and sceptical soul, this ancient of twenty years who might have said with Lord Byron, "And if I laugh at every mortal thing, 'tis that I may not weep." She relentlessly gave the last touch to his deplorable bringing up. "She was the most broad-minded person I ever met," wrote Benjamin Constant in 1813,[1] "and as this

[1] Letters of Benj. Constant to Mme. la Comtesse de Nassau, *née* de Chaudier, *Journal Intime de B. Constant*, D. Melegari, p. 381.

mind always went straight on its way, it rode roughshod over many things; but it had the great merit of being free from all affectation, of living for itself, without belying its nature to please spectators" (we might add, without caring anything for the harm it did), "so that there was always truth and naturalness at the bottom. I count the time I spent with her among two or three periods of my life that I shall always regret."

It needed nothing less than the young, healthy, and genial enthusiasm of Mme. de Staël to efface, to a certain extent, the unfortunate influences of his past, to make a young man of him, to inculcate an ideal which should leave him, particularly in his later years, neither quiet nor rest. When his friend's eyes were closed, this ideal remained: it was that of liberty. This was perhaps the only love to which he was not unfaithful, except one, which brought him nothing—when he fell under the influence of a woman who cared nothing for him, the

lovely Mme. Récamier, whose political views he embraced for a time. But we are stiil far from that period.

Meanwhile, he has left Colombier, and is unwillingly journeying north, writing to Mme. de Charrière almost "hourly," as he says with his eternal raillery. Strange creature! the pattern of contradiction, who could fall in love with the least enthusiastic woman in the world, as well as with the most so; with a woman who understood him to the inmost recesses of his soul, and with another who loved him to idolatry without ever taking the pains to understand him at all:—that "tout comprendre est tout pardonner," synonym, unhappily, of "tout démoraliser."

He left this new school less fit for marriage than ever, and what Mme. de Charrière had prophesied soon happened: he married shortly after, from sheer ennui, a lady of honour of the Duchess of Brunswick, Mlle. de Cramm. This marriage, as one can imagine, was very unhappy.

Let us presume that if at first he was a very

attentive husband, he was not a model one. She on her side put him out of patience. Her life was a very worldly one, and when neither duty nor pleasure kept her at Court, she paid no attention to anything but her animals—dogs, cats, and birds,—making of her neglected house a sort of Noah's Ark. Constant speaks of her in rather unflattering terms in his *Journal Intime:* "She was older than I, ugly and without fortune, and as a crowning attraction, violent and capricious; the wrongs she did me are the kind that are never forgiven."

Being bored to death in this little provincial town, he followed, with envious eyes, the frenzy that was shaking France, now become a battlefield. What Jean-Jacques and many others had preached, what had been read and discussed in salons, the people were now putting in practice in their own fashion.

IV

IN Paris, thanks to Mme. de Staël, the Swedish Embassy had become a hiding-place for such of the now persecuted friends who shared her opinions as succeeded in escaping the rage of the populace. Bollmann wrote in a letter to his mother[1]: "You know something of the intelligence and fine qualities of this woman, but it would be useless for me to attempt to give you an adequate idea of her heart, for if I told you how she exposed herself, how she dared the boldest steps when kindness alone and the desire to do good impelled her,—if I were to tell you all this, you would think you were reading a romance and not historical truth."

Narbonne, Talleyrand, Montmorency, Beaumetz, the Vicomtesse de Laval, Jan-

[1] *Mme. de Staël*, by Lady Blennerhasset.

court, the Duchesse de Broglie, and many others owed their lives to her. On the 2d September, 1792, she exposed herself to the greatest danger to save the Abbé de Montesquieu. The tocsin was sounding, and her friends implored her not to start at that terrible moment; but she had promised the Abbé to take him away in the guise of her servant, and to join him outside the gates of Paris where he awaited her. To avoid giving any aspect of flight to her departure, she got into her carriage openly, in front of the Embassy. Her boldness almost cost her her life. The crowd flung itself on the carriage, asserting that she was carrying away the nation's gold. She had only time to let Montesquieu's servant escape to bear to the poor Abbé the heartrending news that she could not go to his assistance. She was made to cross the entire city. It took three hours, —three hours of slow torture in the midst of a furious mob. She almost fell on the steps of the Hôtel de Ville; a gendarme held her up. Later, when speaking of this episode,

she said that if she had fallen she would have been lost. "It is the nature of the populace to respect what still stands upright." She defended herself courageously, after having been abandoned by her former "acquaintances, who feared" to compromise themselves.

She pleaded her rights as Swedish Ambassadress. Manuel, to whom she had appealed a few days earlier in behalf of Joubert, and who had then yielded to her importunities for another, took pity on her. He made himself answerable for her, and conducted her to his office, where she passed six hours in mortal anguish. In the evening, under cover of the darkness, he took her home, and next day, thanks to a passport which he procured, she was able to start.

Once in safety at Coppet, she organised a plan of rescue by means of which she succeeded in snatching innumerable victims from the hands of the executioner. She had deposited a large sum of money in Paris for the purpose of corrupting the employees

of the Commune and the guardians of the frontiers, and to obtain false passports. She provided with passports and sent to Paris, people whose description tallied with those who were in immediate danger, and the latter were thereby enabled to escape.

One of those that she had the most difficulty in saving was the Princesse de Poix, who had seen three generations of the house of Noailles, to which she belonged, perish on the scaffold. Mme. de Staël sent 40,000 francs to facilitate her flight, and, patriot as she was, ended by exclaiming, at the height of her despair and fear of being too late, "Ah, mon Dieu, let her but come and let France perish; I have made this treaty with misfortune!"

Nevertheless, in the end, Coppet seemed to be too quiet a retreat for a nature as variable and thirsty for emotion as Mme. de Staël's. She soon held "all Switzerland in magnificent horror." In spite of the efforts of her family to retain her, she left for England and rejoined the circle of friends who had

preceded her, being in greater danger than she, who was protected by her position as Ambassadress.

The greater number of those who had escaped the massacres were to be found at Juniper Hall in Surrey. They formed a little colony. Most of them led a precarious life, denuded of all resource, sometimes deprived of the necessaries of life, obliged to earn their bread as they could, or to live on the charity of their friends. But all their contemporaries agree in saying that they kept up their spirits wonderfully, and retained all their brilliant social talents, and perhaps, also, the insouciance that had led to this inevitable catastrophe in France.

Mme. de Staël found Narbonne, whom gossip assigned as the cause of her journey. She was the bright particular star of this circle, as she had been in Paris, and as she continued to be wherever she went throughout her life.

She returned to Coppet in June. Benjamin Constant, dying with ennui, tired of his

matrimonial experiment, and of the life he led at the little Court of Brunswick, which he execrated, at about the same time threw up his post as chamberlain in ordinary, or rather "very extraordinary"[1]; sued for a divorce, and appeared in 1794 at his father's house in Lausanne, and at the old door of Colombier, to weep out his unhappiness on the shoulder of his too indulgent friend.

The so-called first meeting of Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant took place on the 19th September, 1794. It was a decisive moment in his life and made a statesman of him. He describes it thus to Mme. de Charrière[2]: "My journey to Coppet has been successful. I did not find Mme. de Staël there, but overtook her on the road, got into her carriage, and drove from Nyon here (Lausanne) with her. I have supped, breakfasted, dined, supped, and then again break-

[1] Letter of Benj. Constant to Mme. de Charrière, *Revue des deux Mondes*, 1884.

[2] *Revue Suisse* of 1844.

fasted with her, so I have seen her well and, moreover, heard her.

"It seems to me that you judge her rather severely. I believe she is very active, very imprudent, very talkative, but kind, confiding, and giving herself up in good faith. A proof that she is not a mere talking machine lies in the active interest she takes in those she has known formerly who are now in trouble. She has just succeeded, after three costly and vain attempts, in saving from prison and getting out of France, a woman who was her enemy in Paris, and who made it her business to express her hatred in every way." On October 21, 1794, he again wrote to the same lady [1]:

"It is impossible for me to be as obliging on the subject of Mme. de Staël as on that of M. Delaroche. I cannot find it difficult, as you say, to eulogise her. On the contrary, since I have known her better, I find it difficult to refrain from praising her incessantly, and from exposing to all with

[1] *Revue des deux Mondes*, 1844.

whom I speak the spectacle of my interest and great admiration. I have rarely seen such a combination of astonishing and attractive qualities, so much brilliance and justice, such widespread and systematic benevolence, so much generosity, such gentle and courteous manners in society, with so much charm, simplicity, and ease in familiar intercourse. She is the second woman I have found who could replace the whole universe for me, who would have been a world in herself for me. You know who was the first.

"Madame de Staël is infinitely cleverer in intimate conversation than in society; she is a perfect listener, which neither you nor I imagined; she follows the mind of others, with as much pleasure as her own; she brings out the best points of those whom she loves with an ingenious and constant attention, that shows as much kindness as cleverness. In fact, she is a creature apart, a superior being, such as one meets perhaps once in a century, and such that those who have met

her, who know her and are her friends, should ask no other happiness."

Mme. Récamier alone, among her biographers, tells us that at first Mme. de Staël received Constant's attentions rather coldly. It is true that sometimes relations, or very close friends, see certain things less clearly than indifferent spectators, but it seems to us very improbable that Mme. de Staël long remained indifferent.

She left for Paris; Constant followed her, and paid her most assiduous court, employing all his arts of pleasing; and all those who looked on soon agreed in saying that she was greatly interested in him.

It is a great pity that the Baroness Pückler Pranitz will not publish the first part of the *Journal Intime*, seeing that her father has published the second. Is it from a feeling of delicacy? As it has been judged opportune to publish one part, and been shown that another exists, this discretion seems rather superfluous. The only passage in it that we know

speaks of the beginning of the intimacy thus [1]:

"It is curious to notice how much value women attach to even the most foolish acts of men who are interested in them. It was agreed between us that, to avoid compromising her, I should never remain at Mme. de Staël's house after midnight. Whatever might be the charm I found in our conversation, and my passionate desire not to break it off, I was obliged to yield to this firm resolution. But this evening, the time having seemed shorter than usual, I took out my watch to prove that the hour of my departure had not yet arrived. But the inexorable hands showing the contrary, in a sudden childish passion, I dashed the instrument of my condemnation on the ground. What folly! 'How absurd you are!' cried Mme. de Staël. But I saw a hidden smile through her reproaches! Decidedly this broken watch will do me a great service." And the next

[1] Preface of the *Journal Intime* of Benj. Constant, by Dora Melegari.

day he wrote: "I have not bought another watch; I no longer need one."

Do we not see the modern man in these words? If in these days we speak so often of Benjamin Constant, it is not for nothing, but because we feel a bond of relationship with him.

The clearness of mind, that faculty of keen observation that gives to certain of us a double individuality, he also possessed in a supreme degree. He was present as a spectator at all the events of his life. Does not the modern man, indeed, follow his own movements with a vivisector's interest?—a melancholy aptitude that renders us incapable of free enjoyment. We no longer allow ourselves to live, and the analysis we make of the feelings of others only serves to complete that which we make incessantly of our own. We make a long martyrdom of our sufferings, because we dissect in order to criticise them. Joy and happiness are no longer passing sensations, which succeed and balance each other; they are subjects of experience.

Yes, Benjamin Constant was indeed one of us—but Mme. de Staël was no neurasthenic; she vibrated with vigorous life, that she shared in a measure with those who frequented her society. Benjamin Constant became the inseparable companion of Our Lady of Coppet, the centre of her salon; and for the first time in his life this blasé Werther appears as a young enthusiast, with a fresh and radiant countenance. The taciturn mocker became a brilliant talker, on whose lips Mme. de Staël absorbingly followed her own opinions, which he knew how to clothe with an originality that enchanted her—an originality perhaps not altogether personal, but partly the result of his upbringing. He launched into politics. He wrote letters to the papers which excited the attention of the royalist party, and aroused its sympathy, which he did not want.

With the impetuosity of youth he went further than he had meant to; later he tried to efface the impression he had made, and to go back to the path from which he had al-

lowed himself to be led away. After that time circumspection and prudence in politics never once left him, and if his political career was crossed by Napoleon, it was not blindly, but deliberately, that Constant exposed himself to defeat.

Mme. de Charrière, who saw him again after he had come under Mme. de Staël's influence, found none of her own left. "The most perverse of men before thirty," as Mallet du Pan called him, "has become a sincere enthusiast." Certainly, the heart of one who is still capable of enthusiasm is not entirely perverted. Mme. de Charrière wrote impatiently: "I find him much changed; his career, half political, half amorous, has no longer the power to interest me. We did not laugh at anything together. Besides, the Neckers were forbidden subjects that must not be touched. This rupture is a pity for me. For him, who is younger, and no doubt needs movement and change, it may settle many things, and Mme. de Staël, full of ideas and intelligence,

on good or bad terms with the whole world, is worth more to him than I."

Unfortunately, we have not found any letters of this first period, which must have been the happiest of their lives. Constant was not created to confer perpetual happiness; it may be, also, that the Ambassadress, commanding and exacting, as are often those who themselves give much to others, was sometimes a little fatiguing.

The following letter, written in 1797, by Benjamin Constant to his aunt, the Comtesse de Nassau-Chaudieu, shows that he is already weary of the tie, and that he no longer holds the opinion that those who are privileged to call themselves her friends "should ask no other happiness." He expresses himself as follows [1]:

"HÉRIVAUX,[2] 18 May, 1797.

"I write you, my dear Aunt, from the

[1] *Journal Intime de Benj. Constant*, by D. Melegari.
[2] His place near Paris.

depths of the most profound solitude, surrounded by my forests, and feeling that stability in my position is all that is needed for me to be tolerably happy. I write to ask if you can help me to give what it lacks to this situation. A bond that duty holds me to—or weakness, if you will,—but to which I feel that I shall hold as long as no real duty shall free me from it, and that I cannot break without confessing that I am terribly tired of it—which I am too polite to do,—a bond that flings me into a world I no longer care for and drawing me from the country which I love, makes me profoundly unhappy, and menaces a fortune [it was rather his frenzy for play that menaced his fortune] that I have only acquired, during my wandering life, by a miracle; a bond, in fact, which can only be broken by a blow that cannot possibly come from me, has enchained me for two years."

Then follows the proposal to find him a wife, an idea that returned to him with the

greater tenacity in that he was the less fitted for a durable union.

His aunt does not seem to have had any illusions on the subject, for we read a little later, in another letter to her [1]: "You wish then, most amiable of aunts, to have your nephew remain a celibate! Let your will be done. I resign myself the more easily because my legitimate Sovereign has returned and all insurrectionary plans are abandoned. To speak seriously, I have received new, and such great, marks of devotion from the person to whom I thought it more advantageous, both for herself and for me, to appear less attached, that I could not think of doing anything that would pain her, without the greatest ingratitude, and incurring the risk of bitter regret. . . . My friend's arrival makes no change in my habits. I divide my time between her country house and my own. The more reason one has to grieve, the more does solitude become a necessary resource."

[1] *Journal Intime de Benj. Constant*, by D. Melegari.

Their liaison, then, that had seemed to be growing cool, was now more strong than ever. Mme. de Staël rejoined him in France; she had given him "proofs of such devotion" that all thought of insubordination left her friend, and he returned to the fold.

In October, 1797, Albertine, the future Duchesse de Broglie, was born.

During the summer of 1798 Mme. de Staël was divorced from the Baron. Her time, as well as Constant's, was spent between Paris and Coppet, and all was for the best in the best of worlds.

Thanks to some political writings which attracted attention, and to some articles in the papers, Constant had made himself famous. He was chosen Deputy[1] at the Tribunat. He announced his nomination

[1] The Tribunat was at first composed of one hundred members who had passed the age of 25, representing the Opposition in the government. They discussed legal projects, adopted or rejected them, and sent three of their members before the legislative body to sustain their opinion. They were chosen by the Senate for a period of five years, renewable by fifties each year.

to the Comtesse de Nassau-Chaudieu in the following words [1]: "The papers will have told you, my dear Aunt, what has happened to me. I desired it greatly, not for happiness,—is there any in life?—but as an occupation, as a duty to fulfil, which is the only way to lighten the burden of doubt caused by the remembrances and anxieties which are the inevitable lot of our sad and transitory nature. Those to whom pleasure is still an attraction, for whom novelty still exists, and who have preserved the happy faculty of being interested, have no need of affairs, but those whom physical and moral youth has abandoned need a formal commission to do some good, so that they may not abandon themselves to apathy and discouragement. I have received this commission and I shall try to fill it."

One of Benjamin Constant's eminent qualities was, indeed, that of being always ready to help others, to work for their good and

[1] *Journal Intime de Benj. Constant*, by D. Melegari.

busy himself with their needs. Many appealed to his kindness and had recourse to his influence, and never in vain. One cannot help smiling, nevertheless, at this panegyric of disinterested duty in the mouth of one who was, at heart, a very ambitious dilettante. But when we remember the letters of a little Don Juan, written to his grandmother at ten years of age, we are not surprised that at thirty-four he knew how to adapt his style to the ears of a kind and good aunt.

The Tribunat held its first meeting on the 11th Nivôse. The legal plan that was presented had for its object the regulation of the respective correspondence of the authorities charged to co-operate in the formation of the laws. However, Constant threw himself into it as if the defence of public liberty had been in question. It was, at bottom, only a question of form, but nothing seemed indifferent to him. "Let them not mutilate," he cried, "our discussions, which will doubtless be often without result! Let them not take alarm at some words, which

after having resounded in these walls, will disperse in the air. Let them not make our institution a chimera, and the laughing stock of Europe!" They took fright, however, at such violence, And it was not only the First Consul but, to speak truth, all France that became alarmed. They were tired of the brilliancy of the tribune, and of the rhetoric that had too often preluded the unbridling of the people.

Mme. de Staël was still very enthusiastic about Bonaparte, and even more so about the Constitution; she pushed Constant still farther towards the opposition, through an instinctive feeling that warned her that the lion, which seemed drowsy, would soon stretch forth its formidable paw. She saw a check in the Constitution, and it is probable that, at that time, she still hoped for the good of France from the powerful genius who had, by force of arms, won her the respect of Europe. Apart from his opinions, Constant, like many clever men, loved to shine; discussion and opposition were his elements;

but he seems to have understood, better than his friend, the power of Bonaparte and the danger of irritating him. Before renewing an attack similar to the one of the Constitution of the Tribunat, he reminded her of the danger to which he exposed himself in speaking again that way.

Whether she did not believe the First Consul capable of taking the measures which he took to repress her later on, whether the successes of her idol intoxicated her to the point of throwing prudence to the winds, whether the liberty of her country was more precious to her than her own interests—which she proved throughout her life,—the fact remains that she never ceased to urge him on this dangerous road. The three motives probably influenced her; are not our acts nearly always the result of various considerations and impulses?

On the 4th January, during a party that she gave at which Lucien Bonaparte was present, Constant again said to her: "Look! your salon is again full of people who please

you; if I speak, it will be deserted to-morrow. Think of it!"

She trembled, but her hesitation was short-lived. "One must follow one's convictions," she replied with noble confidence.

Benjamin pronounced the famous discourse that he had meditated for several days, which she had read before it was delivered. In the evening Mme. de Staël wished to give a party in his honour, but during the afternoon no fewer than ten letters of regret reached her. The disgrace of Benj. Constant was expected. A few days after, Bonaparte said to his brother Joseph, during a public reception at the Tuileries: "What are you going to do at Mme. de Staël's? It is a house where one meets only my enemies; none of my family should go there."

Fouché, Minister of Police, and the First Consul's instrument, advised Mme. de Staël to retire to the country for a few days; she went, but nothing had changed when she returned, and she was put under a ban. The iron hand of the First Consul began

to weigh heavily on her. Constant has himself left us his opinion of it [1]: "The dominant idea in 1800 was: 'Liberty has harmed us and we want no more of liberty'; and those who modestly asked these candidates for servitude to observe that the ills of the Revolution proceeded from the fact that the Revolution had suspended all liberty, were stigmatised as Jacobins and Anarchists. A nation that begs for bondage from a military chief but thirty years old and covered with glory, should be served as it wishes; it was so served."

Constant was often tempted to join with him, but he was faithful to liberty. Bonaparte in vain said to him, "Why do you not come and discuss things with me informally, instead of declaiming in the Palais Égalité?" Constant remained firm. And each session found this pale young man at his post, beginning his oration in a slow, monotonous voice, without any animation,—warming up little by little, raising his voice, which be-

[1] *Mémoir sur les Cent-jours.*

came sonorous as his blue eyes brightened, and he shook back his blond locks. From clear reasoning he passed to irony; his memory, his cosmopolitan education, his knowledge of English institutions, his felicitous quotations, all helped to make it possible to listen to him for hours without fatigue. With perfect calmness, he aroused tempests of rage in his adversaries, and opposing to them a dry and cold politeness he would disconcert them at times by a reply in the best manner. Such is the impression that his contemporaries have left of him. He was, assuredly, not an enemy to be disdained.

The First Consul began by eliminating Mme. de Staël's influence. She had to yield, and, on the advice of her friends, she retired to Coppet, hoping thereby to pacify her great adversary.

About this time she learned that M. de Staël was ill, and although three years had elapsed since their divorce, she hurried to his bedside to nurse him. She even wanted to take him back with her to Coppet, but

Broglie and Comtes d'Haussonville, have changed nothing in their great ancestress' abode, and the rooms can still be seen as they were when so many tender and tragic episodes took place in them. The old gate of Coppet opened then to an uninterrupted file of illustrious persons; the pick of all the civilised nations, the greatest minds, the finest intellects exchanged their thoughts within its walls, under the impulse given by the ardent vitality of a hostess whose presence alone seemed to call in play all dormant faculties.

Certainly Napoleon knew what he was doing when he banished Mme. de Staël. "This woman," he said, "teaches people to think who would not do it of themselves, or who have forgotten how." When she wrote him that, in persecuting her, he had kept a page in his history for her, she did not deceive herself. She never had a more flattering eulogy than that of this genius deciding that she was dangerous to his government, and capable of inflaming others

against his tyranny. Incorruptible herself, and inflexibly devoted to the love of liberty, Mme. de Staël, even when out of France, knew how to retain on the road to liberty many wavering spirits.

Constant, among others, did not fall under Napoleon's spell until his whole being had been shaken by a mad passion for a woman who by her presence so often adorned the house at Coppet, the great charmer, and intimate friend of its mistress—Mme. Récamier.

The enthusiasm and passionate feelings of the daughter of the calmest of men caused other minds to emit flashes of light. Conversations became animated under her ardent gaze; but it sometimes happened that one left these soirées, which at Mme. de Staël's wish were often prolonged into the small hours, crushed and exhausted by the expenditure of all one's faculties. "Singular woman," cried Constant; "her sway over all who surround her is inexplicable, but very real." [1] And Constant was not the only one

[1] *Journal Intime de Benj. Constant.*

who received this impression; many others have expressed the same feeling. Bonstettin also said that after a visit to Coppet, one appreciated the conversation of insipid people who made no demand on one's intellect. We have all, I fancy, felt the same way, after having been in continuous intercourse with people of great intellectual vitality. Mme. de Staël's strange mental vigour alone resisted this incredible activity. The conversation that filled her salon troubled her so little that she often wrote notes and letters surrounded by her world, while she continued to talk, absolutely indifferent to style or orthography, sure of expressing her idea to her reader in whatever form it might be, solely occupied with living, and imparting her intense life. But she seemed unable to live out of France, not to say Paris. She was less than nothing of a cosmopolite; her intelligence allowed her to appreciate foreign things, but her heart and all her being yearned for Paris; the more so that Benjamin Constant was there, and that she must have felt that

he was absenting himself from her, and meditating anew the final rupture, planned for a long time but always deferred. She would not take the advice of her friends; she returned to France.

V

IN October, 1803, we find her at Saint Brice, with Mme. Récamier; but soon she received an order to leave the country within twenty-four hours. In case of her refusal, it was decided that a gendarme should escort her to the frontier by force.

Thanks to the intercessions of her friends, the twenty-four hours were extended to a few days, but in the matter of banishment Napoleon was inexorable. To General Junot, who called his attention to the fact that, if he forgave her, she would become one of his most grateful and devoted subjects, he replied, perhaps not unreasonably: "Yes, yes, I know her; *passato il pericolo, gabbato è il santo.*"

A note of Junot's has since been found which leads one to believe that Napoleon was

on the point of yielding, "thanks to the intervention of his brother Joseph, a faithful friend of Mme. de Staël's." At any rate, Joseph and his wife tried to soften this draconian order by inviting her to visit them. She went to them for three days, less as a pleasure than as a mark of her gratitude; and then she left France with one of her sons and her young daughter.

Benjamin Constant, a young man, chivalrous and at heart excellent, was at his post, and accompanied her. By his consolatory words he succeeded in calming her overexcited nerves, so that she was enabled to continue her journey to Metz. "Without Benjamin," she said, "I should have succumbed to my troubles." This was the act of a true friend, for to show one's self a partisan of Mme. de Staël at this time was the equivalent of complete disgrace with the All-powerful. Mme. de Staël passed by Fulda, a little town and old bishopric not far from Frankfort. It was her first visit to Germany. She had not dared to go to

England—which would have been more to her taste—for fear of further irritating Napoleon; and the prospect of a long stay in Switzerland did not attract her, this Switzerland that she detested, and where she said she had passed the most painful period of her life. Napoleon's sternness was the incentive of one of Mme. de Staël's greatest works, for she now made her studies on Germany.

At Fulda she wrote the following curious note, which is interesting as showing the intimacy of the relations between herself and Benjamin Constant.

"FULDA, 5th October, 1803.[1]

"I beg Benjamin, if ever I am again peacefully in Paris, to remind me that I give him the absolute right to prevent me

[1] M. Ritter says in his *Notes sur Mme. de Staël*, "We notice one of the rare errors of J. H. Menos. Letter LXIII, addressed to Rosalie de Constant from Frankfort, could not be of the 1st Oct. 1803, it is of the 1st Dec." It would seem to us, however, according to this date, that M. Menos was right. M. Ritter does not say where he drew his conclusions; was it from

Benjamin Constant
From a contemporary lithograph

taking any step, from the greatest to the least important, that can in any way endanger my peace, and above all, that of my generous friend."

This strange note seems to us more a document than a letter. Besides, nothing shows (as far as we know) that Benjamin had left Mme. de Staël during the early part of this journey. This sort of friendly contract, on the contrary, gives the impression of being the final result of discussions, and indicates that Constant wished to have it in writing, to show to his friend when enthusiasm, or some other violent feeling, should carry her away; for it was certainly she, impetuous and imprudent as possible, who had brought this banishment on herself.

The two friends had alas, perhaps, taken into account the fact that it was she who

Mme. de Staël's letter to Girandot of 26th Oct.? We have not seen the original, but is it not possible that Mme. de Staël mistook the date—she who had no head for figures? For this letter also shows the month of October, and, after all, they could not have been at Fulda until after having been at Frankfort.

had urged Constant on in so violent an opposition, and regretted having contributed to thus arresting in its beginning the career of her neophyte.

From Fulda they went to Weimar, the first end of this journey. They arrived there on the evening of the 19th December. A great many of the literary celebrities of Germany were assembled there, and Mme. de Staël was offered the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the two greatest poets of the country, Goethe and Schiller. Her arrival was an event in the little town. Talent, wit, and genius met at the soirées, under the auspices of a little Court, protectress of the arts and sciences, which recalled those of the petty tyrants of the Renaissance, without, however,—"autres temps, autres mœurs,"—the bloody intrigues; and also, unhappily, without the splendour of environment. Constant was the link between the sparkling Frenchwoman and the Germans. There did not seem to be any surprise at their existing relations. They only noticed that she always

called him by his Christian name, that she spoke to him as to a younger brother, while he treated her in the most respectful manner. Mme. de Staël threw herself heart and soul into the literary life of the country, and chance allowed her to satisfy her curiosity with the fullest enjoyment.

On the other hand, her slight knowledge of the language was an impediment; she wished to understand, to appreciate, and to judge everything. At first, they were enthusiastic about her wit, her fervour, her intelligence; but at the bottom of the Teutonic genius there is often the heaviness of the serious and methodical workman. Little by little they became impatient at this woman's aspiring to absorb the products and the workings of the minds of a people in a few days. They became exasperated by a flow of conversation, however brilliant, which was without interruption and left neither rest nor peace to its auditors. Schiller[1] wrote to Goethe: "After our friend's departure, I felt as if I

[1] Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe.

were recovering from a serious illness." It was only a momentary sensation of his overworked nerves. One can understand his fatigue after conversations in which he had to speak on subjects most important to his genius, in a language of which he had only an imperfect knowledge. Later on, however, we learn from a letter to his sister that he really appreciated this extraordinary woman at her full value. In 1805 he wrote: "Mme. de Staël is a phenomenon of her sex. Few men could be compared to her as to wit and eloquence; and with all this there is no trace of pedantry or self-sufficiency. She has all the distinction that comes only by contact with the great world; and at the same time, a seriousness and depth that are acquired only in solitude." His first opinion, which may be read in a letter to Goethe, was also very flattering.

This sojourn at Weimar seems to have been a time of tranquil study for Constant. Whilst his friend moved several times, he remained there, and at the period of her journey to

Berlin he did not rejoin her until after some time. The uninterrupted social life that, throughout her entire career, seemed to attend the steps of Mme. de Staël, resumed its course in Berlin, and he, who did not care so much for it, returned to Lausanne. The death of M. Necker occurred during his absence from Mme. de Staël, and the despair of which he supposed her to be the prey revealed all his tenderest feelings. He hurried to meet her, to try and soften this terrible loss for her. It is touching to see this man taking so lively a part in the sorrows of others. Sismondi[1] accompanied him. Their carriage broke down five times; Benjamin was beside himself at not being able to rejoin her more quickly. At last, she coming from one direction and he from another, they met at Weimar, and he took her back to Coppet.

Describing the condition of Mme. de Staël after her father's death, he says[2]: "It is a

[1] The historian, a friend of Mme. de Staël's.
[2] *Journal Intime.*

singular combination, this deep grief, harrowing and real, that overwhelms her, joined to this susceptibility to distraction, this incorrigibility that leaves her all the weaknesses of her character, all her self-esteem and need of activity. . . . I am deeply attached to all at Coppet, but this continual activity, this perpetual distraction, fatigues and unnerves me. I lose my strength and I ask myself bitterly, 'When will this end?' " Bonstettin[1] gives once more the same impression: "I have to-day, Thursday, returned from Coppet, where I went on Tuesday, and I feel stupefied, wakened from my rest, fatigued with a debauch of intellect. More intellect is dispersed in one day at Coppet, than in one year in many lands. But I am half dead, and my room seems like a tomb. The world is too small for her ardent soul."

Constant groaned and made little attempts at emancipation. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of Lausanne imagined that the

[1] Victor de Bonstettin, born 1745 at Berne, †1832, writer (his biography by Morell).

two friends would marry; but nothing came of it.

Did Mme. de Staël desire a secret marriage, such as she made later on with Rocca, and did Benjamin refuse to yield to this arrangement? One can deduce from the regrets that Mme. de Staël often expresses in the following letters that it was not she who refused this marriage, as Constant with his habitual chivalry seems to have made the world believe; but in truth himself, who could not decide to chain himself irrevocably to what he called "a volcano."

The idea of marriage pleased him generally, and was never absent during the whole course of his life, but he always spoke of it as a haven of peace. His family regretted that their liaison did not legalise itself, and he pitied himself in every way for having "neither the pleasure to which he had sacrificed his dignity, nor the dignity to which he had sacrificed his pleasure."[1] "Minette (Mme. de Staël) is in a bad temper because

[1] *Journal Intime.*

I won't sit up late at night. It is clear that I shall be obliged to marry so as to go to bed early"; and things went on the same way always.

In July, 1804, Constance d'Arlent, his cousin, paid a visit to Coppet, and on her return amused her cousin Rosalie by the tales she brought about him[1]: "Benjamin was ill; he grumbled all day like a spoiled child. Beside she was shockingly fond of little Albertine. Between him and her mother she is being killed with caresses, spoiling, and ill-advised attention."

During the period following her father's demise, Mme. de Staël was continually filled with thoughts of death. When she was not momentarily held by some interest, she gave way to the blackest of moods, and the following letter is perhaps the result of one of these conditions of the mind that led her to foresee an early death for herself.

[1] Letter to Rosalie de Constant. J. H. Menos.

"Codicil to my will, addressed to Benjamin Constant."

"1st November, 1804,
"COPPET.[1]

"Dear friend, rejoice for me if Providence decides that I shall precede you to the tomb. After the loss of my father it would be impossible to endure yours. I will rejoin the admirable man whom you loved, and await you there, with a heart whose faults God will forgive I hope, because that heart has loved much. Interest yourself in my children; I have asked them, in a letter that you will show them, to love, in your person, one who has been so faithful a friend to their mother.

"Following arrangements that we have made together, I declare that a house in the Rue des Mathurins, of which half was bought by M. Fourcault, under the name of Mme. de Nassau, your Aunt, belongs to you (the half that is not M. Fourcault's)

[1] Codicil written entirely in Mme. de Staël's hand, on stamped paper, with the seal of the Canton of Vaud, and the inscription "Liberty and Country."

for life. You will leave the property to my daughter after you, without this being included in the account of the division of my inheritance, and if you judge best to sell this half, with the consent of my daughter's guardians, you will invest the capital securely, but the interest belongs to you, and must belong to you during your life.

"ANNE LOUISE GERMAINE STAËL DE HOLSTEIN."

The following letter, written on simple note paper, is, as one can see, almost a duplicate of the preceding one. It was perhaps a draft, for the style seems more personal and spontaneous. This letter comes from the precious collection of autographs of M. Bovet, which was bought at his death by M. Liepmannssohn, an antiquary of Berlin. M. Godet kindly informed me of the existence of this document, which I have added to the other letters of Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant.

"DEAR FRIEND:

"Rejoice for me if Providence decides that

I shall precede you to the tomb; after the death of my father it would be impossible to endure yours. I will rejoin the admirable man whom you loved, and I will wait for you there, with a heart that God will forgive because it has loved much. Interest yourself in my children; I have asked them in this letter that you will show them to love in you one whom their mother has so deeply loved. Ah! this word loved, which has made our fate—what does it signify in the other world? The Creator of my father is a being too kind. My friend, pray to Him; it is by Him that the dead communicate with the living. You know that, by reason of arrangements made between us, a house in the Rue des Mathurins, bought by M. Fourcault, in the name of Mme. de Nassau, belongs to us both, with this condition, that the interest is yours, and the principal my daughter's after you. If you find it better to sell it, you will invest the money in a manner approved of by my daughter's guardians, but the interest will be yours until your death.

"Good-bye, dear Benjamin; I hope that you will be near me at least, when I die. Alas! I did not close my father's eyes. Will you close mine?

"NECKER STA L DE HOLSTEIN.

"1st October, 1804.

"P. S. The principal that you will leave my daughter has no part in the partition between my three children."

On the 3d February, 1805, Mme. de Staël, still sad and discouraged at the death of her "best friend" (her father), decided to undertake her journey to Italy, to distract her mind from her grief and to regain strength. She could not persuade Benjamin to accompany her. He only went as far as Lyons with her, from whence she continued her journey alone to Milan.

She made the acquaintance in this town of Monti, "poeta e Cavaliere—gran'tradutor dei traduttor d'Omero," whose talents and qualities of mind she certainly exaggerated at first. A correspondence which continued

during her whole journey resulted from this meeting. Signor Monti even visited Coppet in August of the same year. Mme. de Staël made a short stay in Florence, frequenting chiefly the house of the Countess of Albany, the morganatic wife of the last of the Stuarts.

She spent most of her time in Rome, where she was much fêted, and found a circle perfectly suited to her taste in the home of the Humboldts. All the illustrious personages in Rome frequented the salon of the Baroness Humboldt. Corinne knew Canova there, and appreciated him greatly. Sometimes she went with friends to his studio in the evening. She could there admire, ennobled by his great talent, faces that had caused most of her troubles; the colossal statue of Napoleon, that of his sister Pauline Borghese, works which, in Rome, must have been a bitter reminder of the omnipresence of her great persecutor. In March she went to Naples, where Queen Caroline, sister of Marie-Antoinette, received her with open arms.

We soon find her again in Rome. Benjamin writes that he has received a letter from her.[1] "She is enchanted at her success in Rome. May it do her much good! She has written a sonnet on the death of Jesus Christ that she read at the Académie des Arcades. There is really something of the mountebank in this behaviour. If this sonnet is seen in France it will be a new cause for ridicule. They will say that she wished to try devotion as a means. What a misfortune is this ambition for small successes that have already given her so much trouble."

Constant breathed more freely at a distance from her, but we cannot believe that she had entirely lost her power over him; one is only ruffled at the idea of a person being ridiculed when one is still attached to her; and he followed her, as it were, always with his eye when she was away from him; he was chagrined, in his rather light manner, that she could do anything that would expose her to public criticism. On the 12th June,

[1] *Journal Intime.*

Mme. de Staël was in Milan, and in August she returned to Coppet, where Benjamin at once joined her, and resumed his yoke, in a still less patient spirit.

The *Journal Intime*, the letters to and from his parents, give us so detailed an account of this period, that we can see the dénouement of this liaison as plainly as if it had taken place under our eyes.

Many people believe they see the exact reproduction of this episode in the little classic *Adolphe*, but is it not rather the story of the character of Constant, which, in every circumstance of his life, was to suffer the same impressions? The aspirations for liberty, innate in human nature, healthily developed; the necessity of showing, by renewal and transformation, the power of life, which loosens surely and slowly the most securely tied bonds,—these feelings are nowhere else depicted, perhaps, more acutely. The uselessness of wishing to hold one who wished to emancipate himself, and the cruel struggles that were the consequence,

could not be better described than by the pen of the man who had suffered such martyrdom, between the considerations that his kindness of heart inspired, and the invincible instincts created by the satiety that urged him towards liberty and a new life.

Three years passed in almost daily struggle, and this "wavering and checkered" character did not acquire the firmness that would have put an end to the ills created by these two beings, who attracted each other magically, who were sincerely attached to each other, but of whom one, however, no longer completely satisfied the other. A terrible dilemma for a nature thoroughly good at bottom, and not brutal, to be no longer able to give anything but friendship when the other party still experienced love. It was nothing but ruptures and reconciliations from day to day, and in the eyes of the world Constant played the most deplorable of rôles.[1] "I incline continually towards a rupture with Mme. de Staël, but each time that I have

[1] *Journal Intime.*

this idea, I am destined to change it the next day."

An intimacy of ten years, a thousand common interests, joys, and sorrows that have been sincerely shared, must leave ineffaceable traces. He swore each day that it would be the last of their liaison, every day he announced a decisive rupture, "and then rage, and an impossible reconciliation,"[1] but "departure difficult"[2]; and further on, "her impetuosity and imprudence are a perpetual torment and danger to me. Let us break it off, if possible; it is the only chance for a peaceful life!"

He then went to Paris to arrange Mme. de Staël's financial affairs. At the same time—and can one blame him seriously for this double dealing, knowing how unwillingly he was retained?—he was carrying on the tenderest love affair with his future wife, Charlotte de Hardenberg.

He had known her formerly in Brunswick.

[1] *Journal Intime.*
[2] *Ibid.*

It seems that she had even then attracted his attention, for they had not ceased, since that time, to exchange occasional letters. But, at that time, she was entirely taken up with her love affair with General du Tertre, in which her husband, Baron de Marenholtz, who does not seem to have been an Othello, assisted with much apparent calmness. It ended in the abduction of Charlotte. In no way exemplary, the manners of those small Courts excused these slight lapses, at which the tolerant husband seems merely to have smiled rather mockingly, and, in fact, she and his family remained on the best of terms. After the death of M. de Marenholtz, she even returned with Benjamin to Gross-Schwülper to pay a visit to her son. But let us not anticipate.

Constant, trembling at the wrath and the terrible scenes made by Our Lady of Coppet, and fearing, besides, that there might be a limit to his gentle Charlotte's patience, arranged some meetings with her, and put them off incessantly, being unable to decide

on leaving Coppet. He became impatient, lamented, was desperate, and took poison. Mme. de Constant also took poison, and their friends resuscitated them. In short, he played every kind of comedy; he even played it seriously in a little amateur theatre.

The neighbours and acquaintances of Geneva and Lausanne hastened to his representations, in which to the interest in the play was added that of being able to follow the second comedy, or rather the drama, which because of Mme. de Staël's imprudence was too openly played behind the scenes. Constant, generally a bad actor, was at this time deplorable, and after the representation of *Andromaque* a joke went round [1]: "Je ne sais pas si c'est le Roi d'Épires (des pires), mais Benjamin est bien le pire des Rois." This ridiculous exhibition in public ended by turning his friends against him, and even his parents, also, kind and indulgent as they were to him. Outbursts of rage towards "Minette"

[1] *Letters of Benj. Constant to his Family*, J. H. Menos.

(Mme. de Staël), and the remorse he felt at the falseness to his future wife, fill all the pages of his journal.

Charlotte wrote him the most affectionate letters; she was now surer of him than ever. "If she knew all, would she forgive me? How slowly time passes, and into what gulf have I thrown myself? In the evening there was a terrible scene. Shall I come out of it alive? I have to spend my time in lying and deceiving to escape the fury that terrifies me. If I had not the hope of Mme. de Staël's early departure for Vienna, this life would be insupportable. To console myself, I pass my time imagining how everything would go if all went well. Here is the castle in the air: Charlotte completes her steps [her divorce from the Vicomte du Tertre, which she finally obtained on paying him a large sum], and prepares everything secretly. Mme. de Staël, suspecting nothing, starts for Vienna. I marry Charlotte, and we spend the winter pleasantly in Lausanne. If this is granted me, I shall know how to

profit by my happiness. . . .Yesterday was the 14th anniversary of the baleful union that I am trying so unsuccessfully to break. All goes well when one does exactly what she wants. Let us submit, and dissimulate; it is the art of the weak." [1]

At last, in 1807, Mme. de Staël left Lausanne and went to Munich. From there she proceeded to Vienna, thence to Dresden, and stopped for the second time at Weimar. On the 19th June she left again for Geneva, going by Séchéron in Switzerland, where Benjamin Constant had arranged a meeting by letter.

She had hardly arrived when he met her, and while she was going up-stairs he informed her of his marriage.[2] Immediately after telling her this news, he wished to present his wife to her.

Could any one in the world follow the thread of the foolish thought that inspired

[1] *Journal Intime.*

[2] He had married Charlotte on June 5, 1808, at Dôle (Jura).

Constant to surprise her in this manner? There is only one thing to say of it: these are the great means of weak egoists.

Mme. de Staël, wounded to the depths of her soul, turned from him. We know that, not only was she in despair, but that her pride was mortally hurt. She desired that the marriage should remain secret for a certain time; a bizarre idea that put Mme. Constant in an intolerable position, to which, however, with her exceptional kindness of heart, she yielded for a while out of regard for Mme. de Staël's feelings. But soon the marriage was a secret from no one, and the Comtesse de Nassau, Benjamin Constant's aunt, and a much respected friend of Mme. de Staël, persuaded her that this desire was unworthy of her, and that it even harmed her with the world. Peace was made, and soon a kind of intimacy was renewed; an intimacy that the Constant family feared, and with reason, but about which he tried to reassure them in several letters.

"COPPET, February, 1810.

[1] "I have received your very kind little letter, dear Aunt, and hasten to answer it. If it is that I may be at Lausanne on Sunday, that you wish me to arrive on that day, it will be very easy for me, and I beg you simply to command me. If it is with the idea that I may not return here, I will tell you that, having charged myself with the regulation of the accounts of all that Mme. de Staël has lent me, according to the books kept during fifteen years, this business, which will perhaps not begin till Sunday—her valet de chambre, who is to bring the papers I required, not arriving till Saturday,—this business, I say, cannot be finished. It is important to me to compel Mme. de Staël to receive what I owe her; I can only do so by arranging the accounts to the smallest details; for, when I begged her to tell me what I owed her, she always replied that she knew nothing about it, and whether

[1] *Letter of Benj. Constant to Mme. la Comtesse de Nassau*, J. H. Menos.

from friendship, or in revenge, or a mixture of both, she would ask nothing better than to go away leaving me her debtor. . . . I am bent on finishing with Mme. de Staël, and, above all, in not having it believed that I engaged in this discussion to get out of it by a groundless quarrel. My honour is at stake in this."

He wrote also to Rosalie Constant: "I have just settled all my pecuniary affairs with Mme. de Staël. Everything is agreed on in this matter between her and myself. Everything passed with justice and nobility, and all will be terminated at our first interview."

The following was the result of their interview:

"21 March, 1810.

"Between the undersigned, Mme. la Baronne de Staël Holstein and M. Benjamin Constant de Rébecque, it is agreed as follows:

"Mme. la Baronne de Staël Holstein, having lent sundry sums to M. Benjamin

Constant de Rébecque, and these sums having been lent at divers periods, partly for the personal use of M. Benjamin Constant and partly for things pertaining to Mme. la Baronne de Staël, neither the capital nor the interest can be calculated exactly.

"However, the undersigned wishing to arrange this matter suitably and to their mutual satisfaction, M. Benjamin Constant de Rébecque has pledged and pledges himself to Mme. de Staël Holstein, née Necker, for the sum of eighty thousand French francs, the which will be payable only on the decease of M. Benjamin Constant, capital and interest, present and future, until that period.

"Mme. la Baronne de Staël Holstein accepts this mode of payment, declaring that the aforesaid sum covers the amount of her divers claims until the present day, and that the present document is substituted for all other preceding ones whatever, so that nothing can be demanded of M. Benjamin Constant de Rébecque by any one

as long as he shall live, for capital and interest, present and future, for any cause whatever.

"M. Benjamin Constant de Rébecque pledges himself to Mme. la Baronne de Staël Holstein to make the present contract the first clause in his will, and to place a copy of the said will in the hands of Mme. la Baronne de Staël Holstein, or of any person she may designate; also to notify Mme. de Staël, should circumstances relating to others interested in this will call for a change in the other clauses, it being understood that these changes will make no difference in the obligations assumed by M. Benjamin Constant de Rébecque in the present document, for himself and his heirs, towards the Baronne de Staël Holstein.

"In testimony of which we have signed the present private deed, giving it executive power, promising to conform to it ourselves, and renouncing all law or contrary agreement, and all notes, recognisances, and deeds whatsoever of whatever date they may be,

until this day, especially a note for 18,000 francs (eighteen thousand francs) bearing the promise of a mortgage on the domain of Vallombreuse[1] by date of September, 1804, are declared null, and M. Benjamin Constant de Rébecque is acquitted of them.

"Made in duplicate this 21st March, 1810.

"NECKER B'NE DE STAËL HOLSTEIN.

"BENJAMIN CONSTANT DE RÉBECQUE.

"The present document is null if M. Benjamin Constant de Rébecque should have children."[2]

About this time M. de Rocca (Albert Jean Michel) came to Geneva. He was a young Frenchman who had served in Napoleon's army in Germany and later in Spain. His adventures had made quite a personage

[1] A property that passed from the hands of the family of Constant to those of Mme. de Staël, who made a present of it, in some way, to Benjamin.

[2] This codicil is written in Mme. de Staël's hand; the rest, except the signatures, is written probably by a notary, on stamped paper of the Canton of Vaud.

of him, a young hero about whom the most romantic stories were circulated. He had fought like a lion in Spain. Left for dead on the field of battle, it was said that a beautiful Andalusian had taken pity on him. Charmed with his marvellous beauty, she hid him in her hut and took care of him. He returned to Switzerland suffering from the effects of a ball in the lung. Attacked by phthisis, and having the use of only one of his legs, the other having been wounded by a ball, he was believed to be doomed to die at any time.

Mme. de Staël became interested in his unfortunate condition. He was at once touched by her attentions, and became wildly enamoured of this woman of forty-five, he being only twenty-three. He swore that he would obtain her sympathy; more than that, he surrounded her with such affection, love, and veneration that he at length touched the sensitive heart of this poor woman, wounded by her friend, persecuted by a slow tenacity of rancour, and seeing

herself more and more abandoned by those whom she held dear. All these motives must have contributed forcibly to render her more sensitive to this love, this young and respectful adoration, which must have contrasted strangely with the manner of his predecessor, the man of the world, witty and blasé. One had always preached prudence, and the proprieties before the public—this young warrior saw only her and his passion. He committed all imaginable absurdities to gain a look from one who might have been his mother. One day he was seen on horseback—he who could use only one leg—galloping down the paved steps of the town of Geneva, to pass into the Rue de la Cité beneath Mme. de Staël's windows. In short, she ended by yielding to his importunities. A secret marriage took place, which was not made public until her death, fear of ridicule having prevented her acknowledging it while she lived.

Constant must have been somewhat surprised, when he came to Mme. de Staël's in

the spring of 1811, to find himself insulted by this young man, who forbade his assiduities. A duel was the result; the following letter describes the incident:

"GENEVA, 19th April, 1811.[1]

"I the undersigned, declare:

"Yesterday, the 18th April, I came here to confer with my lawyer, M. Girod, about some business I had entrusted to him. After this conference, I paid a visit to Mme. de Staël and supped with her. When I left her after supper, M. de Rocca accosted me and told me that my attentions to Mme. de Staël displeased him exceedingly, and that he wished to fight a duel with me.

"Since one can never refuse such a proposition, I could not, and must not enter into any explanation nor ask him to notice that my so-called frequent visits were limited to two calls in three months, that I was going away to-morrow, and that I am on the point of undertaking a long journey. Being at-

[1] Letter already published in a German translation, in the *Dichterprofile* of A. Strodtman.

tached to my wife by the tenderest ties, and leaving her as little as possible, I cannot be suspected of wishing to encroach on the domain of any one whatsoever.

"The manner in which M. Rocca accosted me permits only the acceptance of his proposal (without further discussion).

"We agreed, then, to meet this morning at 9 o'clock on the Pont d'Arve, and to end by means of weapons the affair that M. Rocca has deigned to bring forward. As I cannot foresee the issue, I will make some provisions here, in case I am killed.

"I ask forgiveness of my wife for all the sorrows I have caused her, and for this last catastrophe which will grieve her still more bitterly.

"I beg her at least to believe that I have not provoked it. My feelings for her, deep and unchangeable, were an obstacle to any gallantry towards another woman; I love no one in the same degree as I love her. She has been an angel to me, and my last word, if I die, will be a prayer for her, my

last feeling that of gratitude and love.

"I forgive Mme. de Staël for the event of which she will have been the cause, and I do not hold her responsible for the fury of a young fool. I beg her also to forgive me if on certain occasions I have grieved her. I do not question if I was wrong or right; to have given her pain is sufficient to make me feel remorse.

"I leave all that I possess without exception to my wife, begging her to come to an agreement with my father as to the portion he will demand. But as far as my wishes will count, I make her a present of all that she wishes to keep of my possessions.

"I hope that my father will not grieve for my death, and this thought consoles me for the circumstances that have estranged us from each other during these latter years.

"I leave to M. d'Arlens [1] seven packages [2]

[1] M. d'Arlens, son of David Constant d'Hermenches, cousin of Benj. Constant.

[2] Probably these packets contained the *Journal Intime*, republished by Dora Melegari (Paris, Ollendorf,

sealed and marked with the letter "Σ" which will be found in a box at Mme. de Nassau's.[1] On opening them he will see what use he should make of them.

"BENJAMIN CONSTANT."

Each of the two friends was now firmly married; but the past had none the less existed. It inspired violent feelings in M. de Rocca, and awakened his martial instincts. General du Tertre, on the contrary, showed himself much more pacific, as we can see by the document we publish below.

We found it among Mme. de Constant's papers. The interest in question is probably that of the sum which this amiable gentleman had obtained to soften the bitterness of the divorce, or rather of the annulment of his marriage with Charlotte.

"TO MADAME DE CONSTANT.

"I acknowledge having received from Mme.

1895); for the letter is Greek and these letters were written in Greek characters.

[1] Constant's aunt, the Comtesse de Nassau, *née* Chaudien.

de Constant, *née* Comtesse de Hardenberg, the sum of eight hundred and forty francs, for the interest accruing on 25th of last December, from the capital that she owes me.

"GENERAL DU TERTRE.

"I have received, my dear friend, with gratitude, the assurance of the interest that you keep for me, and the promises that you so kindly wish to make for my welfare. You are not dealing with an ingrate, and I repeat, sincerely, that I will keep a good place for you in my heart throughout my life.

"I hope that you will be happy, for I have never borne malice to any one, least of all to you, whom I have loved tenderly.

"I return you the portrait since you wish for it; I could not have it in my rooms without exposing myself to questions which, in my position, must be avoided; the influence you had over me has been too often advanced as an obstacle to another tie. I have still your picture done by Annette which

I can keep. If you will send back mine, even for a time, you will oblige me; it is the only one done in my youth that looks like me, and I would like to have it copied.

"Adieu, my dear friend; although I must not see you henceforth, I hope that you will be so kind as to write to me sometimes, to tell me of your plans, and what has become of you, and to give me news of your health.

"Adieu; think of me as of a very sincere friend.

"Aly."

The marriage of Mme. de Staël with Rocco was, contrary to probability, very happy. He gave her for the rest of her life an enthusiastic affection, and showed her the most chivalrous attentions; while she, in turn, took care of him with a devotion which never flagged to the day of her death. She had a son by him early in the year 1812. It was a very delicate child. At Mme. de Staël's death we read in a letter from Mme. Patterson Bonaparte to Lady Morgan: "None of her friends were aware that there had been a marriage, and

if her will had not revealed the fact, the news would have been treated as a calumny. To marry a man twenty years her junior, without name or fortune, is, in France, an absurdity *worse than a crime.* Her son by him is called one of her *posthumous works.*"

The persecutions of Napoleon still kept Mme. de Staël far from Paris, and the conditions of her banishment became more severe and more painful. She could scarcely associate with her friends any longer, for friendship with her inevitably attracted unpleasant attention from the government, and disgrace on the part of the Emperor. A letter, the copy of which was kindly sent us by the widow of M. Alexandre Meyer Cohn of Berlin, possessor of a fine collection of autographs, will perhaps not be out of place here:

Letter from Mme. de Staël to the Comte de Champagny

"1808, 24th October, COPPET.

"I heard from Vienna, M. le Comte, that you have written to General Andréotti that

he must not come to see me, nor receive me at his house, and that your motive for this injunction is that I have seen M. Gentz.[1] I have the honour to inform you that I have seen M. Gentz twice, at Teplitz in Bohemia. Teplitz was on my direct route going from Vienna to Dresden, and your Excellency is not ignorant of the fact that, at a watering place, it would be impossible, even if one wished, to avoid meeting every one who is there. Besides, having been engaged, for a year past, on a work on German literature, I conversed with all the distinguished German writers without exception. I own, I was far from thinking that one would, at present, imagine I had any political ideas whatsoever; one would be stupid to have any in times when destiny, interpreted by the genius of his Majesty the Emperor, arranges the lot of each and all,

[1] M. Gentz, a political writer, secret agent of Metternich, of the Bourbons, and of any one who paid him: a great intriguer, carefully watched by Napoleon's police.

completely. Although my exile has done and is doing me harm that the liveliest eloquence could not succeed in describing, I am resigned, and far from seeking any suspicious intercourse, I pass my life in occupations the most foreign to the pursuits of this world. The Emperor was very willing to assure me of his protection elsewhere than in Paris; now to what country can I go if I have not the support of the French Ambassador? I had counted on spending this winter in Vienna with my second son, but if you do not revoke this order to General Andréotti, not only can I not go there, but I must also take away my son, who cannot be brought up there without me. I beg you, M. le Comte, to remind his Majesty the Emperor that he deigned to promise my eldest son at Chambéry, that he would accord me his protection in Europe. If he refuses it, nothing is left me, as a mother, but to take my two sons and go to America, where my father bought some land about ten years ago. I will take

this step if I must, but it is hard to decide on—I know of what small interest I and my family are, in the midst of the immense crowd of those with whom his Majesty is occupied, but the supreme power will need but very little time to do justice, and my children and I will all be deeply and respectfully grateful to you. I beg you, M. le Comte, to present my humble request to the Emperor. I am convinced that you will find it pleasant to give me good news. For six years, now, my unhappy lot has known no amelioration.

"Accept the homage of the high and respectful consideration that I devote to you.

"NECKER DE STAËL HOLSTEIN.

"To the COMTE DE CHAMPAGNY, Minister of Foreign Affairs."

On the 23d May, 1812, Mme. de Staël, worn out by the treatment of Napoleon's police, who held her prisoner, as it were, in the last refuge that had been granted her, left Coppet as a fugitive. She had been obliged to leave behind her the child, who

was too young to be exposed to this difficult journey, and who, besides, does not seem to have played much of a part in his mother's life. Rocco did not join her till twenty-four hours had passed, so as to avoid awakening suspicion. After having crossed Austria in secret, and Russia almost in triumph, she arrived in Sweden. There, at last, she felt herself in a safe refuge. The hereditary Prince of Sweden, Bernadotte, was an old friend, and moreover, by her marriage with Staël, she was a Swedish subject.

In a letter to Villers on November 29, 1812, she wrote: "I am in the shelter of the pole, and a kinder star than I knew in the south. It is but a momentary refuge, but is not life, at present, more divided up than ever? I almost died of grief in one half of Europe, in the other I was loaded with homage. I await the rest of my life, if it must still last a long time, and I look upon my own destiny as if I did not exist."

From Stockholm she wrote soon after to Benjamin Constant:

"STOCKHOLM, 17th April (1813).

"I have seen M. de Wangenheim.[1] It is a singular fate that brings us together. I am giving him these lines for you. I received a letter from Villers[1] before communication was interrupted. When shall I receive any now?

"Copenhagen seems always the best, and soon Doxat and Divet.[2]

"What I do not understand is, why your taste for letters has not shown itself sooner, and why it does not show itself now.

"I do not speak in any way of myself, but of you. Why do the Doxats not tempt you; finally, what are you doing with your rare genius?

"What you need is decision, and I, since I

[1] See the commentary that follows.

[2] Doxat and Divet, Bloomsbury Square, Londor. Constant had his letters sent to the same address from the time of his stay in London in 1816. The Doxats were a family of French refugees, it appears, who lived in the country, and to whom Mme. de Staël wished to go. They probably had a banking-house in London.

have had it, have found it very good. I do not ask anything in my name, but cannot you do anything of yourself? Ah! when once I was going from Coppet to Lausanne, to get you back from Rosalie's,[1] I would have waited until you begged me, but my resolution failed me; to complain that your movements are not spontaneous, would it not prevent their being so?

"Albert[2] has started for Stralsund. Has Wilhelm's pamphlet in French[3] reached you? I expect Auguste[4] every minute, and as soon as he arrives I shall go to the country."

Besides her two sons, Auguste and Albert, Mme. de Staël mentions two of her intimate friends in this letter, Schlegel and Villers. As there will be frequent mention of them

[1] Cousin of Benj. Constant.

[2] Son of Mme. de Staël.

[3] Schlegel, *Du système continental*, at first attributed to Mme. de Staël, first published in English and German anonymously.

[4] Son of Mme. de Staël.

in these letters, we think it well to give some details about their lives, and their relations with Mme. de Staël and Benj. Constant.

Schlegel, who played a somewhat important part in Mme. de Staël's life, had joined her in Sweden with her children, and changed his rôle of tutor for that of secretary to the hereditary Prince. August Wilhelm Schlegel, professor at Jena, was a scientific man, a distinguished littérateur and poet. Born in Hanover, he entered Mme. de Staël's house as tutor, and lived there for many years. Mme. de Staël was his material Providence, and he was greatly attached to her. At her death she left him all her papers, from which, however, he published only one work, and that under the protection of the Duc de Broglie, for he was very unpopular in France. Schlegel could not always have been easy to endure in the animated circle of Coppet. Several of the guests complained of him, and Constant alludes to his exaggerated susceptibility which, he said, could endure no teasing.

The kind of rivalry in which these two intimates of the house found themselves, and the biting sarcasms of Constant, were probably great stumbling-blocks to harmony.

Whatever the character of Wilhelm may have been, the two Schlegel brothers were marked figures of the Romantic period. They had less influence through their literary productions, which are scarcely read to-day, than through their theories and criticisms. They put an end to the dryness of rationalism in Germany.

Albert de Staël, one of Schlegel's pupils, born at Coppet in 1792, appears not to have been always on terms with his mother, perhaps because his temperament resembled hers, more than did those of his brother and sister. He must have had a good deal of what Italians call "brio"—the turn of mind possessed in so high a degree by his mother, the vivacity that gave Mme. de Staël's interlocutors the impression of being face to face with fireworks. This young man does not seem to have been able to resign

himself to a regular life, and his mother often expressed herself with anxiety on the subject of his future. He was persuaded to take service in Sweden. His elder brother, Auguste, became aide-de-camp to the King, and Mme. de Staël remained alone in Stockholm with Rocca and her daughter.

In the preceding letter to Benjamin Constant she announces Albert's departure for Stralsund, where he was sent on a mission. From there he went to Hamburg, and, to his misfortune, he again followed a momentary impulse, and got himself transferred to the army of the Russian general Tettenborn. In July of the same year, three months after this letter, he had a duel with a Cossack officer, who at the first blow severed his head from his body.

Mme. de Staël's letter found Benj. Constant at Göttingen in Germany, and at this time he wrote in his private journal, "Mme. de Staël is travelling with Rocca, but she no longer writes to me. The remembrance of her and of Albertine torments me. My

heart is weary of all that it has, and regrets all that it has not."

Mme. de Staël had made use of Georges de Wangenheim (born in 1780) to take the preceding letter to her friend. A neighbour of the Comte de Hardenberg, he was then in Stockholm, sent by the Hanoverian government, with Baron Hans Deltef de Hammerstein, to hasten the embarkation of the Swedish army. He remained in the Swedish quarters until after the battle of Leipzig (16 Oct., 1813), and if he kept this letter in his portfolio until his return to Göttingen, it is not to be wondered at that Constant complained of receiving no news. M. de Wangenheim must have sympathised keenly with Mme. de Staël, because he also, after having openly opposed the Empire, had been obliged to escape from Napoleon's power and to fly for fear of imprisonment. He was first cousin to Charlotte de Constant, whose mother was Eléonore de Wangenheim.

Charles Dominique Villers, who is mentioned in the preceding letter, and whose

name will often recur in those following, was born in 1765, in Lorraine. Though an officer, he found time to study ancient and modern languages and literature. A declared Liberal before the Revolution, its excesses horrified him, and he raised his voice against its abuses. His pamphlet *Of Liberty* (1791) was a great success, and brought on its author persecutions that obliged him to leave France. It was then that he vowed himself entirely to study at the University of Göttingen. His superiority and ripe age naturally separated him from his companions in study, but he became intimate with the celebrated professors of the University. At the same time he continued his literary career. He belonged to the number of those who opened up for the benefit of their French compatriots the unknown territory of German literature. His book, *Philosophie de Kant, ou les principes fondamentaux de la philosophie transcendentale*, was the first French work on the subject. In 1801 permission was

given him to return to France, but his long sojourn abroad had made Germany more sympathetic to him. His work, *L'Esprit et l'influence de Luther*, had a great success and was translated into several languages. Another of his works, *Les doléances des peuples du continent de l'Europe au sujet de l'interruption de leur commerce*, won him the freedom of the city of Bremen, and new persecutions from the French government. He returned a second time to Göttingen, and obtained a chair, of which he was unjustly deprived later by George III., King of Hanover and England, an implacable enemy of France, who could not appreciate Villers, and would see in him only the Frenchman and not the defender of Lübeck when it was besieged by Bernadotte and the indefatigable defender of the German universities against Napoleon's ruinous reforms. He was given a pension of only 3000 frs. A number of persons, several sovereigns and above all Benjamin Constant and Mme. de Staël, interested themselves in

him. They exerted themselves to make him give up his post. Several universities even offered him a chair. Finally the Comte de Münster succeeded in having his pension raised to 4000 frs. It seems that, after a time, they were disposed to re-open the doors of the University to him, but by this time he died (1815), morally crushed by a blow that he had taken too much to heart.

Benjamin Constant wrote in 1813 to Villers[1]: "Now, I am giving to Schlegel, to send from the General's (Bernadotte) quarters, a letter for Mme. de Staël in which I speak of your affair as you would wish. I do not know, just now, who has more credit with her, Schlegel or myself. Her last letter to me was of June 29, and Schlegel has one of October 22. It is the same with the feelings as with the throne, one does not fall to the second place, but to the last and that may well be my case." Constant had at one time calmed Villers by a letter

[1] *Auswahl aus den Handschriftlichen.* Nachlass von Ch. de Villers, herausgegeben von M. Isler.

(from Göttingen, 1812) about his brother's fate. "What an affair at Moscow! I have forbidden myself all epithets. According to details, the French and Germans who were in the town were removed before the fire, so that you have no cause for uneasiness as to your brother's safety. But now his whole life is upset. What a century this is, when two months are too long a future, and seven hundred leagues too short a distance to count on."

Mme. de Staël to Benjamin Constant.

"20th May, 1813 [written, probably, in Stockholm.[1]]

"For two months I have heard nothing of you, and for two years I have not seen you. Do you remember saying, that we should not be separated from each other? I can truly say that, apart from everything else, you have allowed a fine career to escape you, and as for me, what will become of me in my mental isolation? With whom can I talk, and how shall I live?

[1] Letter published in a German translation, by A. Strodtman, *Dichterprofile*.

"My eldest son is with me; he has been appointed Secretary to the Embassy, at the Legation of the United States. I am going to the Doxats' with him, where he will stay for four months (with me in the country). Albert is with his protector[1]; Guillaume[2] also. He will return to me, but in the meantime, his absence makes me still more lonely.

"My daughter is charming; she will write to you from Gothenbourg; it will be her last farewell as well as my own, but I still hope that you will feel the need of seeing us again, and of not allowing to perish that which God has given you.

"Tell Villers that his brother was seized by the Cossacks who have taken him back to Moscow; that he has been in prison, or perhaps sent to Siberia. He should have intercession made to the Emperor Alexander; on my part, I have written to Moscow, but he has not behaved as he should have,

[1] Bernadotte.
[2] Schlegel.

and over there they are severe toward him and the others. I know nothing of his wife or his children, but I will find out by writing.

"I am going to the Doxats, and I will rest and wait there, or perhaps I will die; who knows what God may require of us?

"I have your letters always near me; I never open my writing case without touching them with my hand; I gaze at the address; all that I have suffered by these lines makes me shudder, and yet I still hope to have more of them. My father, you, and Mathieu [1] dwell in a part of my heart that is closed for ever. There, I suffer always and in every way. There I live and die; and were I about to be swallowed up by the waves, my voice would utter those three names of which only one has been fatal to me. Is it possible that you have crushed all in this manner! Is it possible that despair such as mine could not restrain you?

"No, you are guilty, and your admirable mind alone still deludes me.

[1] Mathieu de Montmorency.

"Adieu, Adieu. Oh! if you could conceive how I suffer. Send a few words to Fanny. It is frightful to know nothing of you. Adieu."

The lady alluded to in the last few lines of this letter was probably Miss Fanny Burney, daughter of Dr. Burney, who married General d'Arblay. She was a maid-of-honour to the Queen of England, the friend of Gustave of Sweden, and wrote novels. Mme. de Staël made her acquaintance during her first sojourn in England in 1793, when she joined her friends at Juniper Hall, near Leatherhead, in Surrey. A country neighbour of Juniper Hall, Miss Burney had been enthusiastic, at first, about Mme. de Staël, but she turned against her for many years, having been shocked at her relations with the Vicomte de Narbonne. This was a great grief to Mme. de Staël, but it did not prevent her renewing the friendship when Miss Burney, having become Mme. d'Arblay, once more approached her, for she did not know the meaning of rancour.

VI

FROM Stockholm Mme. de Staël went to England. Some years later Lord Byron described her reception in the following words [1]: "In the year 1813 I had the honour of being amongst the earliest of my countrymen presented to Mme. de Staël on the very night of her arrival in London. She arrived, was dressed, and came 'with her glory,' to Lady Jersey's, where, in common with many others I bowed, not the knee, but the head and heart in homage to an extraordinary and able woman, driven from her own country by the most extraordinary of men. They are both dead and buried, so we may speak without offence. . . .

"On the day after her arrival I dined in

[1] *Letters of Lord Byron.* Edited by Thomas Moore.

company at Sir Humphrey Davy's, being the least one of 'a legion of honour' invited to greet her. If I mistake not—and can memory be treacherous as to such men? —there were present Sheridan, Whitebread, Grattan, and the Marquis of Lansdowne, without counting our illustrious host. The first experimental philosopher of his own (or perhaps of any preceding) times was there, to receive the most celebrated of women, surrounded by the flower of our wits, the foremost of our remaining orators and statesmen, condescending even to invite the then youngest,—and it may be still least of our living poets. . . . Of this 'Symposium,' graced by these now Immortals, I recollect less than ought to have been remembered. But who can carry away the remembrance of his pleasures, unimpaired and unmutilated? The great impression remains, but the tints are faded. Besides I was then too young, and too passionate, to do full justice to those around me; time, absence, death mellows and sanctifies all things. I then saw around

me but men, whom I heard daily in the Senate and met nightly in London assemblies. I revered, I respected them, and neither Beauty nor glory can stand this daily test. I saw the woman of whom I had heard marvels; she justified what I had heard, but she was still a mortal, and made long speeches! Nay, the very day of this philosophical feast in her honour, she made *very* long speeches to those who had been accustomed to hear such only in the two houses.

"She interrupted Whitebread; she declaimed to Lord Lansdowne, she misunderstood Sheridan's jokes for assent; she harangued, she lectured, she preached English politics to the first of our English Whig politicians the day after her arrival in England and (if I am not much misinformed) preached politics no less to our Tory politicians the day after. . . ."

Lord Byron gives us a marvellous introduction to the society which was the last chapter in Mme. de Staël's triumphal Odyssey. She came for the second time, after

twenty-three years, to ask hospitality of the only country that had been able to resist Napoleon's power. This time it was not only the daughter of the famous Necker, the star of the liberal salons of Paris—she who, to save her friends in danger, had exposed her life and sacrificed a part of her fortune; but also one of the literary celebrities of the world.

Lord Byron says again of this event: "Miss Edgeworth, Mme. de Staël, and the Cossack" (the Emperor Alexander I of Russia)—he might have added "and Lord Byron"—"were the sights of the end of the year 1813 and of the following year."

Letter from Mme. de Staël to Benj. Constant

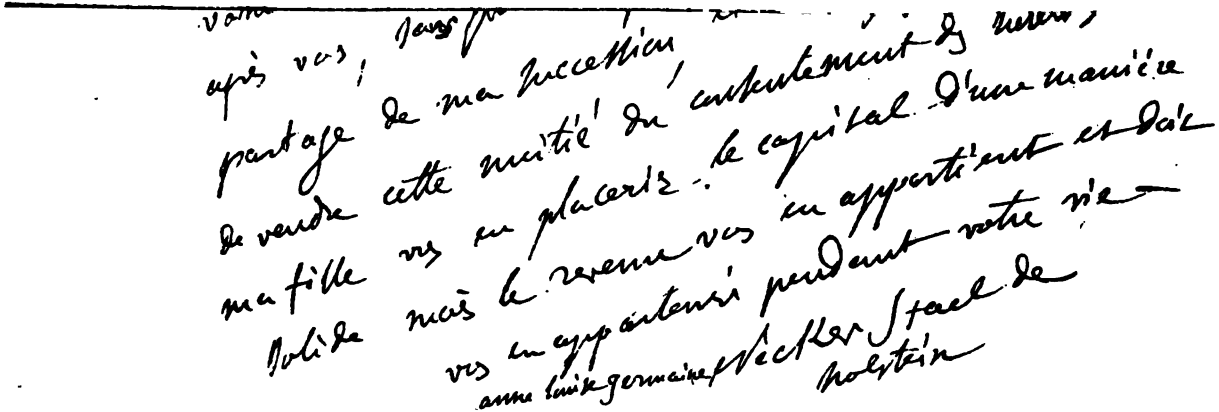
"3d August, 1813, 'DOXAVILLE' [illegible].

"I do not know if you have received my letter; I chance this one by a traveller to Prague. Whatever may follow I cry peace; those who would travel can do so. Will they do it? What I can say is that in this house talent is much appreciated, and the

money spent is a third more than elsewhere; but that is all. I sent you word that I had sold my dress for fifteen hundred francs, which is good enough for one that is not in the fashion of the country. You must write to me by Vienna, at the address of M. de Piez[1] and Mme. Amplainville, care of Mrs. Doxat, provided you love me still. I have not changed; you have robbed me of my happiness, but I do not deny your power. Would it be possible to go to Berlin, even through Mad. Olive; she would not think of it but for seeing you again. But who can tell what you want? At least, all that you have imagined, to use as a pretext to yourself, is false. You know it now.

"God bless you. My daughter is well. I doubt if I can establish her here; there are so many women, and so much money. In

[1] An almost illegible name, perhaps Piez. There are some sentences that are not very clear. Fear that the letters might be intercepted by the police probably made her choose names and turn her phrases in a manner comprehensible only to Constant.



Reduced facsimile of letter written by Madame de Staël to Benjamin Constant

any case I shall stay here two years. Write to me. Ah! Shall I never see you again!"

Letter from Mme. de Staël to Benj. Constant

"30th November (1813).

"At last after three months of silence a line from you to my daughter has reached me; it is of 12th September, and I received it yesterday. But, this morning, Schlegel writes me, on the 30th October, that he did not find you at Göttingen. Is it possible that you did not rejoin the Crown Prince? [1] He esteems you so much, he has such fine views, that conform so well to our ideas!

"Do you do nothing with yourself, with that so superior 'You' that you have taken from me? The only action of your life will have been against me. Certainly, to see you again would be to be reborn; but where and how? I would ask nothing better than to go to Berlin next spring, but does not your situation make everything difficult? We must see each other again, however, before we die.

[1] Bernadotte.

"I and my book are a great success here, but my heart is always heavy.

"I shall never rest; all is spoiled, all is lost for me, by you, by you! May God forgive you!

"I do not think this country suits my daughter. Poor Albert,[1] did you not weep for him?

"I do not wish to die without seeing you again, without having again spoken as I used to speak; but I should wish to die after because you have hurt me to the bottom of my soul, and you will hurt me again.

"Adieu, adieu! I am always as I have been, and you can still tell yourself that I have shed tears only on the death of my unfortunate child, and on your letters; the rest is a cloud, but real life is a pain.

"Adieu! Write to me at present in care of M. de Rehausen, Swedish Minister; there is nothing more to fear; I can conceive nothing to prevent your commu-

[1] Her son, killed in a duel.

nicating with me, by way of Holland, every week."

This letter from England was addressed to Göttingen, where Constant was. We read in the *Journal Intime:* "Charlotte has returned from a trip to Cassel. We had a long conversation on the disadvantages of several things. There is not so much to discuss; the only actual disadvantage of my life lies in being married. Georges Dandin! —On such a day, at eleven in the morning, on the staircase of the Hôtel de la Couronne, I left Mme. de Staël, who told me that we should never in our lives see each other again. It is going that way. Alas! dear Albertine!"

And later: "All the evening I have been busy with remembrances and regrets. I am as much absorbed with Mme. de Staël as I was ten years ago! Charlotte showers kindness on me. I am working, and am less ill morally. I must, however, cease to consume myself. I must accept my situation,

and turn it to the best possible account. I was stupid in breaking, when it might have served me, a tie that I suffered and retained when it did me harm. I regret it; I have been foolish. And after? I must profit, instead of suffering by it; nothing is entirely lost, and much remains to me, more than I deserve. Charlotte will do what I wish. Let me use my talent and be reasonable, instead of being a stupid imbecile. Let me make Charlotte happy; I have done enough harm in my life."

This extract serves to show the inconstancy of the mind of Constant, who swayed between the past and the present; now abandoning himself to tender thoughts of Mme. de Staël, her daughter, and Charlotte; now coldly calculating the chances he had thrown away, when they might have been useful to him; now stiffening himself to "use his talents," and always occupied, in the midst of his fluctuations, with Mme. de Staël's interests, taking part in her troubles as she herself suspected. He wrote

to his aunt Mme. de Nassau about Albert's death as follows [1]:

"Poor young Albert who has perished so unhappily! I have been much touched by it. He was not at all bad, and what there was to reproach in him belonged to his age, and the tastes natural to that age. He conducted himself very well from the time that he saw an honourable career open to him. In short, I have known him from the age of two until that of nineteen years, and I have felt sad at his death as at the loss of souvenirs swallowed up in unfathomable depths."

There is always regret for Mme. de Staël when he is separated from her. On December 29, 1813, we read in a letter from Constant to Villers [2]: "I wear myself out writing to England. There are few royal couriers who do not take one of my letters. But I do not receive a line in reply." In all

[1] *Journal Intime.*

[2] *Handschriftlicher Nachlass des Villers* edited by M. Isler.

the letters of this period one reads these same complaints of the post. How could it have been otherwise at this epoch, among the troubles of war and the tumbling of all the continental kingdoms?

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant.

(On a visit to Coombe Wood, probably at Lord Livingstone's.)

"12th December, 1813.

"Ah! why is Albert [1] not with you? I have been much moved at knowing you to be with the Prince [2]; you read in my preceding letter that such was my desire. Yesterday Lord Liverpool [3] told me that he had read the draught of an address from the Prince to the French, which was the finest thing that he had seen in his life.

"The most difficult thing, nevertheless, remains to be done, for it would be folly to

[1] Albert de Rocca, her husband.

[2] Bernadotte.

[3] Robert Banks Jenkinson, Lord Liverpool, 1770–1828; Prime Minister. A Tory.

hope that one could overthrow the man, in spite of the nation.

"The opposition here is not contented with the title of Sovereign Prince given to the Stadtholder [1]; in fact, they persuade him too much that the word Republic is bad company, and Luther's drunken peasant [2] is very near flinging himself to the other side. Take care that it does not happen to you. Sic vos non vobis. . . .

"Meanwhile this country is admirable; there is a fundamental love of liberty among the ministers, as among the Whigs; every one outside of the court is penetrated by it. I

[1] William Frederick (1772–1843), Hereditary Stadtholder of the Low Countries. Dethroned by Napoleon, he lived for some time in Berlin and in England. He landed at Scheveningen (November, 1813) and at The Hague was named King of the Low Countries and Duke of Luxembourg. He tried in vain to prevent the separation of Holland and Belgium, and resigned in favour of his son in 1840.

[2] Luther compared politics to a drunken peasant leaning first to one side and then to the other. Twenty days after this letter Constant employed the same simile in writing on politics to Villers.

would much like a talk with you, and it seems to me that from Holland you could easily make a trip here. But after all do what suits you, and do not waste your fine talents any longer, that is all that I desire.

"If you wish to have your work on 'Religions' published here, I suggest to you to make an arrangement with the publisher here to print it for you. For the rest, I want nothing more, but to endure all with you. You seem to me like one of those beautiful places in the Kingdom of Naples, undermined by the volcano.

"Although this country is admirable, it seems to me that Albertine will not like it here if we stay very long. We shall go to Berlin, then, when we are able; that is to say, I think, in eighteen months.

"Mackintosh wishes to be remembered to you, and you have some college friends in Scotland, he says, who have retained a high opinion of you.

"My message has had an unheard of success here; what do they say of it in

Germany? They have something better to think of, however.

"I have written to [name illegible].

"Remember me to General Lövenhjelm." [1]

Bernadotte, the son of a French lawyer, had served under Napoleon. Rising rapidly from grade to grade, he became Minister of War and Marshal of France. He was elected Hereditary Prince of Sweden, and adopted by Charles XIII. He took command of the allied troops that marched on Paris. His conduct awakened suspicions that he was acting according to a secret plan; in fact, it appeared that he nursed a hope of mounting the French throne. During the Hundred Days this plan fell to

[1] Gustave Charles Frédéric Lövenhjelm (1771–1856) filled many positions. He was Minister Plenipotentiary from Sweden at Vienna and at Paris, general, courtier, and councillor of state. At the time of the assassination of Gustave III he had a place at Court. As general of cavalry he fought in Pomerania, in Finland, at Gross Beeren, Dennevitz, and Leipzig; was wounded and taken prisoner. He married in 1826, in Paris, Iphigénie de Bagnet.

pieces, and Benj. Constant, as well as Mme. de Staël, who had hoped for a liberal government from him, was greatly disappointed. One is surprised that these two people, who interested themselves so much in politics, could have deceived themselves so strangely on the small chance offered by Bernadotte's position. Constant, however, seems not to have been lulled by any very strong illusions. He wrote "The Béarnais has arrived" (Bernadotte was born in Béarn). "All is rumor owing to the presence of the master. I have decided to go and see if there is anything serious, but I feel myself to be on unnatural ground. If it comes to nothing . . ." [1]

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant [2]

"LONDON, 8th January.

"No indeed, I do not forget you: I would that it were possible to, for I bear a pain in

[1] *Journal Intime.*

[2] Letter published in the *Dichterprofile* of A. Strodtmann.

the depths of my heart that distraction can stifle for a certain length of time, but that re-awakens as soon as I am alone. It is that of happiness irreparably lost. If you had had the character of the man who is devoted to me,[1] I should have been too happy; I did not deserve it. To see you again would be to revive my spirit, and the capacity for hoping, which, with all else in me, is extinguished.

"I shall go on the Continent if you do not come here. It seems that this is now possible; but who knows what will happen in the world? Liberty is as much in danger on one side as on the other. But, before all, it is necessary that he who is beyond the pale of humanity should no longer govern it.[2]

"I have presented a memorial that Schlegel sent me to the Minister. It was written like everything that comes from you. I do not believe that such a style, such decision,

[1] Rocca, her husband.

[2] Napoleon.

such clearness, and such language could be found elsewhere. You were destined for the highest posts if you could have been faithful towards yourself and towards others.

"I will send you some introductions for Villers by Schlegel, but I am entrusting this letter to a traveller, and I do not want to miss this chance.

"Achard [1] has promised me to settle Marianne's [2] affairs. As to your purchase, he has received no order about it. Stocks have risen, but for those who believe in the peace, they will probably rise further.

"Have you read the preface to my book? [3] Do you know what impression it has made on the Continent? If you wish to sell your works here, I believe I could be useful in the matter, and whatever deals with the political situation will have great value.

"I shall go to Greece when I have seen

[1] Cousin by marriage to Constant.
[2] Second wife of M. Constant, the father.
[3] On Germany.

you again. Richard [1] will be my last souvenir. Oh! Benjamin, you have destroyed my life! Not a day has elapsed in ten years, on which my heart has not ached for you, and yet I loved you so! It is cruel—let us leave that, but never can I forgive you, for I shall never cease to suffer.

"Poor M. de Narbonne! [2] He was of little weight, but he too has run headlong to ruin.

"Try to let me know your plans exactly. Mine depend greatly on Albertine. What will become of her? Until now what has been offered does not suit her, and this country is curious. This life is full of change and of weariness, and nothing endures but sorrow.

"Write to me."

Louis de Narbonne (a descendant of Sara de Castillane), who was mentioned in the

[1] Richard, Cœur de Lion, a poem that Mme. de Staël intended to write.

[2] Of M. de Narbonne, who played so pronounced a part in Mme. de Staël's life, a rather detailed account is given after this letter.

preceding letter, was the son of the Vicomte de Narbonne, attached to the household of the Mesdemoiselles de France. According to the scandal of the day, he was the son of one of the daughters of Louis XV and Narbonne, and it was said that Mme. de Narbonne lent herself to the concealment of the fact. However it may be, he was born in 1755, in the palace of the Duchess of Parma, Elizabeth de Bourbon. He became a soldier at the age of nineteen. He was one of the best educated of men. While very young he was greatly taken with Mlle. Necker, and asked her hand in marriage. Long years afterwards she said, in allusion to this episode of her youth, that at sixteen a man had paid her his addresses, and that he was "her one and only love."

Touched by the King's misfortunes, and hoping to be of some use to him, he accepted the post of Minister of War. After having subjugated the Assembly for a short time by his powerful oratory, not being sustained, he was dismissed in this short note

from the King: "I inform you, Monsieur, that I have just named M. de Grave for the Department of War; you will hand over your portfolio to him." This reminds one of these words of Narbonne's: "One can die willingly for a cause, but yet one must have the consent of those for whom one gives one's life."

He left at once for the Army of the North, where he gave still another example of the most active discipline. The Comte de Fersen wrote in his journal that a rumour was spread that Mme. de Staël joined him there, disguised as a man. He returned to escort Mesdemoiselles de France to Italy. Although armed with the necessary passports, the princesses were arrested in a village by the populace, and Narbonne rode full speed to Paris to obtain another formal order from the Assembly, which he obtained only after desperate struggles. When at last permission was given to these old "Béguines" to go and say their prayers in Rome instead of Paris, they sought him everywhere without being

able to find him. It seems that some one suggested, "Go to the Swedish Embassy." It was a "secret de Polichinelle" that Narbonne spent all his spare moments with Mme. de Staël.

Recalled some months after by a secret order from the King, he arrived in Paris alone, without the support of any party, without the possibility of intervening, to be present, despairingly, at the insurrection of August 10th. The next day he was accused and outlawed. When fear closed all doors to the persecuted, Mme. de Staël hid in the Hôtel de l'Ambassade three of her most compromised friends—Montmorency, Beaumetz, and Narbonne.[1] Search was made for them there. If they had fallen into the commissaries' hands, they would have been lost. Thanks to her wonderful presence of mind and her brilliant conversation—reproaching them half seriously, half

[1] *Les Salons de Paris*, by the Duchesse d'Abrantes, and *Mme. de Staël: Her Life and her Surroundings*, by Lady Blennerhasset.

jokingly, for violating the Embassy—Mme. de Staël succeeded in distracting these men from their duty, and getting them away without any serious search having been made.

A young German doctor, Bollmann, saved Narbonne by procuring for him the passport of a compatriot who remained in Paris, and making him pass for a stranger; he helped him also in his flight to England. He thus describes his first interview with Narbonne: "If you remember that on the 10th of August the power was in the hands of the mob, and that I told you that Narbonne, whose presence in Paris was known, was one of the first on the list of victims that their bloody avidity was seeking, you can have some idea of Mme. de Staël's state of panic on the morning of the 14th August, 1792, when I entered her room. Narbonne was with her. They soon saw in me the sole means of saving him. A great many reasons, to which the beauty of Mme. de Staël must not be joined, to my great satisfaction—for she is ugly,—

decided me. She in tears, a man in danger of death,—the hope of saving him, the perspective of England," etc.

At the first news of the King's trial, Narbonne wrote to the Convention alone, having in vain tried to persuade the other ministers to do likewise, to demand an appearance before the tribunal, by reason of his three months as Minister of War, claiming partial responsibility for the acts of which the King was accused. The Convention refused. He then sent his speech in writing to M. de Malesherbes. The King's advocate thanked him in the Sovereign's name, telling him that the latter, touched and even moved, "recommends me not to publish it for fear of compromising you, for he has paid the most scrupulous attention to that, to his last breath."

Talleyrand said: "Narbonne is always chivalrous. He has nothing, wants nothing, needs nothing. He loves study—Books and friends, that is all. One need not be uneasy about him, for he does not suffer, and is not

uneasy about himself. He is wittier than I, a hundred times wittier, but he is less wise. They accused him of trifling at the time of the legislative assembly. These criticisms are the reprisal of dull minds. At bottom there is nothing light about him but his conversation, which is charming. He is indeed very serious, even too serious. He is attached, impassioned, and too zealous."

Narbonne did not return to France till 1809. Persuaded by Napoleon, he re-entered the service. The Emperor, who esteemed him, said of him one day: "There is too much flattery around me. I am weary of it. Would you believe it?—to avoid flattery, even at the bivouac, I have had to take as aide-de-camp a courtier, a witty man of the old Court."

He was sent by Napoleon on several delicate missions to Prussia and Vienna; he took part in the Russian campaign, and died commandant at Torgau, where he arrived ill and weakened by the hardships of the last campaigns. Half the garrison was dying of a

contagious fever caused by over-crowding. He lavished care and attention on the sick, was attacked by typhus, and succumbed. We do not know on what Mme. de Staël based her judgment of Narbonne's levity. As far as we know, it was not levity, but on the contrary a scrupulous conscientiousness in the accomplishment of his duty, that caused his ruin. It may be that she was thinking of his conduct towards women; and perhaps he did leave his fair friends somewhat cavalierly, when his heart had grown cold to them.

Letter of Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"LONDON, 10th January, 1814.

"(Address me in care of M. de Rehausen, Swedish Minister.)

"I wrote to you yesterday by a traveller to Holland, so that I will only add a few lines to Albertine's.

"My health is very bad, and I might easily die. You have taught me not to believe that anything lasts in this world, and all is a dream since I no longer understand you or myself,

for can it be that such a man scorned such an affection, and that such a woman did not know how to make herself beloved, when she loved to the deepest depths of her being,—but enough of that.

"Mackintosh says that in Edinburgh you are considered the most extraordinary being in the world; indeed, I think you are, in every sense.

"All that you say of Albertine is true; you see that she has wit and grace, and withal is beautiful, but she is indolent, and I do not know if she will make herself felt by others.

"I send you a letter for the Comte de Münster [1] that Villers will use or not as he chooses. Has he had news of his brother? I I am interested in this, and I thought of writing to M. de Budaschaft, Minister of Police in Russia, if possible—and if I could have the necessary information.

"One must try to help oneself in this world before leaving it. Have you no idea of the counter-revolution, and do you think the

[1] See the commentary following the letter.

course of events in this matter will spare me? The men of this party here are very polite to me, but I know myself, and I know them, and if there are not conditions . . . [illegible] . . . Lord Russell and Sydney.

"I am astonished that you did not stay with the Prince Royal.[1] It is he that I would have near William III.[2]

"You seem to be very isolated in Hanover at such a time. Try to decide what you want to do; then I will arrange to see you somewhere. My idea was to go to Scotland this summer, to have the political life of my father printed next winter, and to start in the spring of 1815 for Berlin, and from there to go to the Midi by Switzerland, if there is no France, but—but—but—Finally, what are you doing? Give the matter some thought."

This letter is addressed to Hanover where Constant had gone to stay with a relative of his wife, Comtesse Furstenstein, after having spent fifteen days with Charlotte at Gross-

[1] Of Sweden.
[2] King of Prussia.

Schwülper, her son's estate. He wrote while there, *De l'esprit de conquête et de l'usurpation dans leurs rapports avec la civilisation Européenne.*

The letter speaks of an introduction "of which Villers will make use or not," a letter to the Comte de Münster, begging him to interest himself in Villers, apropos of his professorship in Göttingen, of which he had been so unjustly deprived. M. Villers' brother was still imprisoned in Russia, and the order for his release was not given till May, 1814, the Emperor Alexander personally showing interest. Mme. de Staël knew well Comte Herbert de Münster, who had been Hanoverian Ambassador to England. Married to a Princess of Bückeburg, he was guardian of the Princes and Regent of Brunswick during their minority.

Letter from Albertine to M. Benjamin Constant

"10 January, 1814.—London.

"I am very happy, my dear friend, to know that we are nearer to you. We shall be able to get letters oftener. Besides, since you

have been on this side of the free world, I consider myself nearer you. There is only the sea between us, and that, at least, does not prevent us from writing and saying what we think.

"I am living with people who knew you, Sir James Mackintosh, etc. It gives me so much pleasure to talk about you! I cannot see your writing or hear news of you, without experiencing an emotion that comes not only from the affection I have for you, but from all the souvenirs and impressions of childhood. You are much more than a person to me; it seems as if you had taken away a number of things that I shall only find again on seeing you once more. I shall, however, be afraid of you when I see you. I am afraid that you will not find me what you expect. But my mother's happiness will be complete. She has no acquaintance, either in society or in her family, who can recall you for a moment. She gains by it, perhaps, for she works much more, but you are missed from her life.

"I respect and admire this country very

much, although it does not respond to my ideal; but one is wrong not to be happy here; I feel strongly that if I were worth more I should like it better. We have superb hopes; they talk of nothing but the counter-revolution here.

"Our situation is not as simple as it seems, for my mother suffers in knowing the allies to be in France, and the Austrians at Coppet. She is fixed in the same opinions, and the world turns around her, which makes her appear to change, when she is the only person unchanged. On arriving here she found herself a Ministerialist; now she finds herself with the Opposition. She has, however, said and thought always the same.

"Fanny has lost her sister, and is penniless at Vevey, giving lessons for a living; it is a terrible pity. When I compare the house at Coppet with this, I feel very isolated. There is not in this whole country one person who interests me as much as one of our friends now scattered.

"Write to us often. Schlegel is dazzled

with his place. He is not in favour, but he is with a Prince, and that is all he needs. He writes seldom, and tells us little but what is in the 'Gazettes.'

"Good-bye, my dear friend. Write to me, and give Bertichon a special place, because of the respect that you owe me since I became sixteen."

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"ENGLAND, 18th January, 1814.

"I cannot conceive why my letters do not reach you. I have written to you ten times by headquarters, directly, in every way.

"Your book has not arrived at my publisher's, Murray,[1] in Albemarle Street. He says that if you will give him the manuscript before it appears on the Continent, he will pay much more if it is political, less if philo-

[1] John Murray, Lord Byron's publisher, published *L'Allemagne*, with *Corinne*, the most famous of Mme. de Staël's works. It appeared in October, 1813, and the first edition was exhausted in three days. Constant sent him *L'esprit de conquête et de l' usurpation*, which appeared anonymously.

sophical; but would it not be better really to wait on France? They talk of the Restoration so generally here that, whether it pleases me or not, I am preparing for it by living very literarily. One will be undisturbed, I believe; it is best always to put off till that time.

"I shall go to Scotland and Ireland this summer. But I fear that this country offers nothing for Albertine, and I do not wish to stay here. Do you think I should find the right man in Germany? She is not taciturn but she has been disappointed. There are no heroes of romance here, and the wealth of the country makes us seem poor, which is disagreeable when one is not accustomed to it.

"Add to that the counter-revolution, which will be, at the utmost, generous to you, and you will understand my feeling sad. Nothing is clear but the trouble caused by that miserable tyrant[1] who has done harm that will endure long after him.

"My admiration for this country has not

[1] Napoleon.

diminished. Personally, I am content here, but Albertine is all my life in this world, and I begin to fear that she will not be happy here. Speak to friends for her, if you can. What would she do if I should die to-morrow? And my health is much enfeebled. Good-bye. Ah! you have destroyed our future.

"Here is a letter from Mackintosh for you. He is an excellent man, but gets a little frightened at the Garat." [1]

Letter from Madame de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"23d January [1814].[2]

"I have received your pages, 'Sur l'Esprit d'usurpation,' and I am all admiration. The only person who has read them, Mackintosh, had the same impression, and there can be no two opinions on the subject.

"But now listen to what I propose: Do you wish to have it published without your name? Does this style, *à la Montesquieu*,[3]

[1] An inexplicable allusion.

[2] Letter already published in German in the *Dichterprofile* of A. Strodtmann.

[3] Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1671–

seem to you sufficiently decisive (for these times)?

"The publisher who has looked over the first chapter says that, without the name, he will give a hundred louis, but five times as much with it. If you will not profit by this opportunity, then publish your great work anonymously; if you wish to profit by it, then sign your name to it.

"If I am wrong, send your orders by return post and they will be obeyed. Murray says that you are not yet well known here; you should first make a name by this work, and then you will be highly paid for all you write. I give you the publisher's opinion, as well as my own. Decide for yourself.

"Eight days after the arrival of the other pages, and your reply to this letter, the work will appear. But to obtain a good price here, the publication should not take place

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1755), president of the Parliament of Bordeaux, author of *Persian Letters* and of *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur et de la décadence des Romains*, etc.

first on the Continent; the contrary would be preferable.

"Finally, a last question and the most important: Are you of the same opinion as you were three months ago? Do you not see any danger for France? Do you not feel the breath of the counter-revolution which blows in Holland, in Switzerland, and will soon submerge everything in France?

"I am like Gustavus Wasa[1]: I attacked Christiania. But they put my mother on the ramparts. When the flames of Moscow menace Paris, is it a time to speak ill of the French?

"Think of all this, and decide, but without flattery. Say to your self that your talent is incomparable, determine its course, but do not doubt its power.

"The Duc de Berry[2] has been to see me,

[1] The King of Sweden, of whom this anecdote is told.

[2] The Duc de Berry (and Angoulème) was the son of the Comte d'Artois, who held the ruins of government until the arrival of his brother, Louis XVIII, 3d May, 1814, and who ascended the throne on his death, 16th Sept., 1824, under the name of Charles X.

and I do not stand badly with the Bourbons. If they return to power, we will have to submit, for anything is better than new disturbances; but they have not changed at all, nor have those who surround them, and if the absolute power of Napoleon has all Europe against it, theirs will be strengthened by it. I should like to talk with you, but on what subject should I not like to talk with you? Intellectually, at least, we shall always be sympathetic.

"Do you wish to have your name put on your work? Every one will know it, except the public that makes the author's fame.

"It is not the time to excite people's minds against the French; they are only too much detested as it is. As to that man,[1] who would wish to see him overthrown by the Cossacks?

"The Athenians said of Hippias: 'We refuse him to you, if you exact him from us.' He must sign a humiliating peace, and France must demand a representative assembly; but

[1] Napoleon.

as long as the foreigners are there, can we assist them? Opinion here is the same as my own, and you know whether I detest Napoleon!

"Reflect well on what you are about to do. One can say everything in a great work, but in a pamphlet, which is an action, the moment must be well chosen. One must not speak ill of the French when the Russians are at Langres. May God banish me from France, rather than that I should return through foreigners. I have given you my opinion from this time on. You may count on my serving you carefully and zealously.

"Write to me; I have not ceased to write to you, and shall never cease to. You have injured me greatly, and the longer I live here, the more I see that your character is not moral. But I esteem your talent, and the sentiment that filled my heart for so many years. For this reason I shall always be your friend; you must never doubt it.

"What a crisis there is just now! Liberty is the only thing that at all times and in every

country is in one's blood, liberty and—what cannot be separated from it—love of one's country. But what a combination it is that makes us fear the fall of such a man. Has not France two arms, one to drive out the enemy, and the other to overthrow tyranny? Why could not the Senate summon the Prince of Sweden to negotiate a peace? He should be the William III of France. Why do you not seek him? Why does he not go to Paris with only the Swedes? It would be possible. I have known him well, and I consider him the best and most noble man who could reign. I am letting myself be drawn into gossip with you.

"The Duc de Berry is in Jersey, the Duc d'Angoulême[1] at Lord Wellington's,[2] M. le Comte d'Artois has left, to recruit an old commandant general in Switzerland; each has only a single aide-de-camp with him. The Government here say they are not prisoners.

[1] Whom Constant once called "Ce petit cretin d'Angoulême" ("this little fool of an Angoulême").

[2] The Duke of Wellington's.

This country is not for them, but violently against Bonaparte. With him an armistice only is possible, and France, France, if she loved liberty!—

"Let me know if all my letters have reached you. Answer this quickly and in detail, I beg; Albertine also is writing to you."

The following is in Albertine's hand: "Here is a letter on your work from Sir James Mackintosh. I must express my admiration for what you have written. I have been as much captivated in reading it as if it were a novel. It means a good deal when powerful ideas impress me in such a manner. I give myself as an example of the effect on the *masses*."

This letter shows Mme. de Staël in a strange light. It is a manifest proof that she dreamed of this Utopia, of a kingdom with Bernadotte at its head in France. It could well be that such a letter caused Constant to write the following words: "Auguste read me a letter from his mother. What an incorrigible in-

triguer! This has turned my stomach, and broken the last ties of remembrance."[1] How often had they been broken, and always re-united!

Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"27th February, 1814.

"I wrote you by the last post, and I send you your price on 'Destiny,' printed in 'L'Ambigu.' 'L'Usurpation' will be published next week, and I will let you know what they say of it.

"I think my son will see you. Send me word of your plans. Mine are, to return to Switzerland in the spring of 1815, and go from there to Italy; but I wish to see you again, wherever I am, and I ask what you are resolved to do in this matter. My health is very bad, and I do not know if I can surmount the difficult period in the lives of women in which I now find myself.

"I should like to see you again if I must die soon, also if I must live; write me, then, what you will do.

[1] *Journal Intime.*

"I think that the allies have done wrong in wishing to go to Paris; French hearts are revolted at it, and it has given a semblance of devotion to one who has done nothing except for himself; they have given the air of a conqueror to the conquered. In short, they have acted badly and it is because they counted on a Bourbon party that they made this mistake.

"For myself, I can no longer think of anything but France, and she has found herself dependent. Liberty, what blasphemy?—I have taken so much opium to avoid physical suffering this time, that I am in the state I was in when you wounded my soul. It is much easier. Good-bye. Remember me; no one can have loved you as I love you. Good-bye. Albertine loves you ever."

Benjamin Constant wrote apropos of this meeting [1]:

"I met Auguste de Staël. He is one of the

[1] *Journal Intime.*

proudest egoists I know. He will make his way."

The reader will have seen that these outbursts, dictated by a momentary sensation. need not always be taken literally. It seems that Auguste de Staël was an extremely cultivated and a good man. Brought up in Germany, he came under the tutelage of Schlegel. He knew thoroughly both classical and modern languages, which he spoke with the purest accent. He seems to have been particularly gifted for practical life; and joined to all these qualities was his mother's generosity. Only his premature death prevented his attaining celebrity, unless all his qualities were but the result of the education he had received, and of his associations with the best minds, for these sometimes throw a reflected light on a very mediocre entourage, which, in its turn, profits at small cost. His mother does not seem to have had many illusions about him, but the Duchesse de Broglie published some of his writings after his death.

On the 13th March, 1814, Benjamin Con-

stant again wrote to Villers from Casse:[1] "Imagine, dear Villers, I have received a letter from the Sibyl, dated 22d February, which informs me that of all those I wrote her, on the 22d January, 4th February, and 12th of the same month, not one has reached her. I am really grieved at these invincible obstacles that hinder our correspondence. . . . I am going, then, dear Villers, to turn to you and beg you to forward the enclosed. Of all my letters in the last four months, the only two that arrived are the two you kindly sent on. I cannot tell you how annoyed I am at this contretemps, that completes the rupture of a friendship on which I set great store. The Sibyl attributes my silence to some idle stories that have been spread about. I suppose they refer to a marriage, for she says to me: 'You have surely not believed that there can be anything new in my situation.' Married or not, I wish she might have had my letters."

[1] *Handschriftlicher Nachlass des Villers*, edited by M. Isler.

Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"LONDON, 22d March [1814].[1]

"You beg me to continue to disclose my idea; I would like to beg you to continue to disclose your own.

"Have you forgotten what you have written against foreigners, and do you picture to yourself a king supported by the lances of Cossacks? You tell me that I am *not selfish in my wishes.* Yes, certainly; but you—your relations have made a chamberlain of you. Do you then believe that Bonaparte could not show himself in a gathering of princes? Forty battles are also nobility. I detest the man, but I blame the events that force me, at this moment, to wish him success.

"Do you then wish that France be trodden underfoot? A man, whoever he be, has an end; but do you see an end to the fate of Poland? If the French recall the Bourbons conditionally, it will be rather fine; but do you not see that they will make a long crime

[1] Letter already published in a German translation by A. Strodtmann, *Dichterprofile.*

of twenty-five years, and that they will make an article of faith of the legitimate princes?

"I have read your memorial. God keep me from showing it. I will do nothing against France. I will not use against her, when she is in trouble, either the fame I owe her or the name of my father whom she loved.

"Her burned villages are on the road, where the women threw themselves on their knees to see him pass. You are not a Frenchman, Benjamin; you are not attached to these places by all the memories of childhood. That is the difference between you and me. But could you really wish to see the Cossacks in the Rue Racine? At this moment the tyrant is still covered with the glory of French arms, but what will these Frenchmen be if nothing is left them but the recollection of their legislative acts, and of their bourgeois actions?

"In short, if you feared the entrance of foreigners in 1792, when assassinations took place daily, and all Europe was not the enemy of France, what of the present time? I feel in-

wardly that I am right, for my idea is instinctive, and against my personal interests.

"What are you doing? Shall I see you here, in Switzerland, or at Berlin? Your book is much admired by connoisseurs, but stupid people would like more proper names. They wish to translate it, and like everything in this country, its fame grows daily.

"Albertine will write to you in a week. Send Schlegel back to me; I cannot live without him."

Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

(Addressed to Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, Chevalier de Nordstern, care of M. Dubois, banker, Luttich.)

"LONDON, 1st April, 1814.[1]

"I have given your memorial to the Austrian ambassador. He said that it was full of genius but that he did not quite understand how one could rid oneself of the father while retaining the son. In fact, the means of putting it in execution is lacking. Every one agrees with you about the regency, but the

[1] Letter published by A. Strodtmann, *Dichterprofile.*

fact is that once Bonaparte is overthrown the old government will be re-established—it is better, perhaps, but it is sad.

"Your letter has moved me profoundly by the fancy that it is possible you may come here. But I do not believe it. What I can assure you of is that M. de Rocca will behave to you as he does to M. de Montmorency. Our mutual attachment is formed for life; he helped me in my misfortune with such noble courage and such tenderness of heart, that I shall never forget it. He has become another being, and you will recognise neither his manners nor his conversation. *Do not, then, think of him as a hindrance*, but, on your side, do what the heart tells you to. It is not for a week, but for life that we should settle in the same place; but will you do it?

"The inconstancy of your resolutions is so great! You are sure of the reception that I will give you,—too sure, alas!

"You ask me why Albertine does not like England. Really, the young people in society are so numerous and so quiet that I un-

derstand her ennui. In compensation here there is love, or nothing, and until now it is nothing. She prefers Germany. I shall remain here fourteen months longer. On the 1st July I shall start for Scotland. I will do all I can to overcome her moods, and at eighteen I will take her back to France.

"I am often tormented by the fear that all these cares are not what she should have. Ah! the past, the past! You have ruined our lives by the inconstancy of your disposition; we might have been here together, and sustained each other, if you had not been so set against me.

"Good-bye! Be faithful to France and to Liberty. One attains nothing without unity."

Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"Monday, 24th April [1814].

"I am quite of the opinion that one must rally to the Bourbons, and I hope that they will desire the removal of the foreign troops, which appears to be more essential to liberty than all the Senates in the world. I shall

again become the most sincere 'white cockade' in the world, and thinking much more of independence than of liberty, of which, in truth, thoughts are but little worthy. For the rest, I have done with politics, and I shall go to Greece and write my poem on the Crusades of Richard.[1]

"I have written you, as to what concerns me, that my friend[2] is as far as you from any altercation. He thinks no longer of a jealousy without any motive.

"As to Mme. de Constant, I shall be delighted to receive her here, if it suits her, and I shall in no wise accuse her of what I found it too cruel to accuse you of, yourself, in former days.

"Your mind and your talents will always

[1] Richard Cœur de Lion. The poem was never written. She speaks of it several times in other letters. On the 6th April, 1814, we read in a letter to Villers (published by M. Isler): "I shall go to see you in Göttingen next year. Make me a plan of my journey from Göttingen to Berlin, from Berlin to Switzerland, from Switzerland to Italy, from Italy to Greece, for I must write a poem on the Crusades, and I prepare for it by a pilgrimage."

[2] Her husband, Albert de Rocca.

be the objects of my admiration, and to talk with you, if you still like my conversation, will always be the greatest of my pleasures."

The letter is continued by her daughter Albertine:

"You have written me a charming letter, my dear friend, for which I thank you with all my heart. What you say of Schlegel is quite just, but at present he loves you tenderly.

"I am quite sad at leaving England, although I have certainly not enjoyed myself much there; but Englishmen are such true and noble beings!

"I hope that they will travel on the Continent, and they will be very agreeable there. Here they are too much alike outwardly, have the same manner; they must hold to a certain political party, and to a certain thing in society whether fashionable or unfashionable; an Englishman tries to make himself part of a certain thing, rather than to be an individuality himself.

"The French imitate others for effect; the English do it to avoid being noticed.

"I am a little afraid of France, which I do not know; but what I am rejoiced at is that I shall see you, and again enjoy your wit, which is, for me, a souvenir of my country.

"You will find my mother thinner, and feebler in health; but you will see more than ever how admirable a person she is.

"Adieu."

When the Bourbons were restored to power Mme. de Staël could at last return. She did not find France as she and many others had hoped in their youth. The beautiful dream of liberty had lost much of its brilliant colouring. The vicissitudes of exile, so many years of privation and suffering, and so much blood spilled, had rendered her less exacting. The tornado that had shaken Europe for thirty years made even the most impassioned sigh for only one thing—to live in peace. The Bourbons, "who had learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing," were the sole refuge of the

friends of order, and among many evils, people rallied round the one they believed to be the least.

It was a mistake, however, to congratulate Mme. de Staël on the entry of the foreign troops into Paris; her personal gain could not stifle the patriotism that always animated her. "Why do you compliment me, I entreat you, for what makes me despair?"

On the 12th May, 1814, she returned to Paris, and a few days afterwards the doors of her salon were thrown open again, and all Paris hastened to enter. Hers were, perhaps, the most brilliant soirées of the period. The Emperor of Russia, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Talleyrand, La Fayette, Wellington, Montmorency, the Humboldt brothers, and many other great and now historical personages appeared there. The old acquaintances, the faithful friends, and those who were sure of the generosity of a heart always ready to forget and forgive, came to meet her; those who had received her during her disgrace,

those whom she had saved from the executioner's hands, all did themselves the honour to be received by the most celebrated woman then in France, and to congratulate her on having at last attained the much desired haven. Benjamin Constant tells us that he found her "changed, pale, and thin."[1] There are joys that come too late, when the possibility of enjoying them is no longer in our power. Exhausted by a desire too long unquenched, "she is changed in every way, she is *distraite*, almost skinny, thinking to herself, listening but little, and interested in nothing."[2]

We insert here the following letter, whose contents do not indicate any precise period:

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"Why did you not come yesterday? If you think of coming here to-day, remember that I dine at half-past four, so as to go to Brunet.

[1] *Journal Intime.*
[2] *Ibid.*

"It seems to me unbecoming to go to dinner with Mme. Beugnot[1] to-morrow, as I have had no word. If you dine there, tell her that I did not venture to come, having received no invitation.

"You do not think of your real friends. You neglect what is good. All the same it is ill-judged.

"Friday morning.

"The note was written when yours reached me. If you will bring St. . . . [illegible] for an hour, I shall be delighted, but these are my plans for the day. I have nothing from Beugnot.

"Thanks for Villers."

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[1] The Comte de Beugnot (1761–1838) was then Minister of the Interior of the Provisional Government. He had passed through all the metamorphoses of administrative and political life without appearing to be any further on than he was in the beginning. Deputy to the legislature, imprisoned during the Terror, Prefect under Napoleon, Director General of Police under Louis XVIII, then Minister of Marine, he died a peer of France. More famous for his wit than for his deeds, one of his "bon mots" is always appropriate. At a committee meeting they spoke of putting a crucifix in the "salle des sections electorales." "I ask some-

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"25 August [COPPET, 1814].

"I have read nothing so piquant, nor so witty as your remarks.[1]

"It is a *chef d'œuvre* of happy thoughts and brilliant sayings. You have done nothing in my opinion as perfect in its way. I read it to Lady Doray who is here, and we exclaimed at every line; for goodness sake tell me the effect it has had on friends and enemies.

"I must also speak to you of something that gives me much trouble; it is a letter, of which here is a copy made by Schlegel. I do not know if it is a way of blackmailing, or if I really have this horror to fear.

"It would be dangerous to write *one word* to that address, but if you have a man suf-

thing more," said he, "that these words be inscribed beneath: 'My God, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

[1] "Observations sur le discours prononcé par S. E. le Ministre de l'Interieur en faveur du projet de loi sur la liberté de la Presse."

ficiently intelligent to find out who lives there, and if, unfortunately, you must hear this work spoken of, I beg you to go to Beugnot for me, and to have it suppressed. You will feel what harm this can do, and I cannot, in the circumstances, apply to any one but you. My anxiety is not for myself, as you can well believe, but for my daughter. Let me have a word in reply to the two subjects of this letter.

"I have been much interested in the notes to your second edition. An English paper, the *Times*, says, 'the admirable little pamphlet of M. B. C. on the liberty of the press.' Things are dull in England, so send your pamphlets to . . . [illegible]. In Geneva also they are not very liberal."

Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"[PARIS, 1815].

"M. de Balainvilliers says that M. de Blacas has taken my affair to him, and that I need do no more in the matter. You will do me a great favour by giving the details of our affair to A . . . [illegible] to-morrow.

"Are you not going to dine with me to-morrow? When you speak with any degree of truthfulness, even on what displeases me, I draw near to your soul. Till to-morrow then.

"Tuesday, five o'clock."

Probably Constant did dine with Mme. de Staël the day after this letter, as the following passage in his *Journal Intime* apparently refers to that day: "I dined with Mme. de Staël. They expressed great admiration for my work, *De l'esprit de conquête et de l'usurpation dans leurs rapports avec la civilisation Européenne.* I am surprised at it myself, because this was written in the midst of mental agitation which ought to have made it very bad. Blacas is very good to me."

The Duc Blacas d'Aulps (1770–1839) was a minister, and a great favourite of the King's —such a favourite that it was said of him, "France can support ten mistresses, but not one favourite." It was natural for the Bourbons to esteem him highly, for he had served them faithfully in exile, and they gave him

successively many Court and State appointments. Without more political ability than Beugnot, he formed a worthy part of that ministry that had the cleverness to displease alike the republicans, the liberals, the Bonapartists, and the royalists. This, however, did not prevent his becoming a peer of France and standing very well with the King, who chose his ministers above all for merits unrelated to the posts they were to fill. A man of the world, easy and agreeable in company, he was much appreciated in the salons, and many amusing stories were circulated about him. One day, during a reception at the Queen-mother's, as he was passing under a chandelier, his wig caught on it and came off without his noticing it, and he joined in the laughter while looking for the man who had left his headdress hooked up there. When he saw that it was he himself, he only laughed the more. At the time of the second return of the Bourbons, the King had to yield to the majority and accept his resignation. He finished his career as Ambassador to Naples.

Except in a few respects, and in the desire to make himself useful to Mme. de Staël at all times, Constant does not seem to have troubled himself much about her. In his Journal, he notes the pleasure he has had in receiving a letter from his wife at so unsettled a time, when every one was complaining of the post. "The gentle, good, and excellent, creature, noble and indulgent," was with her parents in Germany, and Constant sought to console himself for her absence, and for the void left by his coldness toward Mme. de Staël, on which we hear the old refrain, that this stay in Paris had delivered him from all that remained of his old feeling for her. He consoled himself by a mad passion—very feebly, or not at all, shared by Mme. Récamier.

He was abstracted and bored by everything. Politics were only a sort of opiate, to which he abandoned himself violently at times, largely to please the lady of his affections, or to forget himself. He bought a house in one of the best parts of Paris, and was unhappy because this purchase brought with it many

little matters of business that took up his time; the time that he wished to spend at the feet of the "lovely angel." An unhealthy activity seemed to have seized him. We see him in turn downcast or full of vitality. He wrote, one after the other, a pamphlet and a thundering article,—on the liberty of the press, on guaranties, on the Constitution, on the responsibility of ministers, on the opinions of M. de Montesquieu, etc.

The Bourbons had promised to respect the liberty of the press, but it was held imprudent to keep the promise to the nation, and a law was passed to abolish it. He had been one of its principal defenders. The day this law was passed he expressed himself with his usual fire.[1] "The law is passed! Good-bye to the Constitution, and to the devil with France! What fools are the Governments that kill opinion that was on their side." He had few illusions. "We are not playing a very brilliant part in Europe," he had writ-

[1] *Journal Intime.*

ten to Villers, the preceding year, "but when we were brilliant, we were so unhappy that our present mediocrity is a sort of relief to our weary imagination!" [1] This was, perhaps, the general feeling; but when, on March 19th, Napoleon, returned from the island of Elba, re-entered France triumphantly, sweeping before him all signs of opposition, this same imagination of the people was his strongest support.

Benjamin was no longer a young man; he was forty-seven years old. His beautiful blond, or rather red, curls, about which he and others had made many jokes, were becoming grey, his forehead was even getting a little bald. His long, Puritanical face must have formed a strange contrast with the violent passion that had taken hold of him, and that made him at the last moment, after Napoleon's landing, defend with violence a cause which, at heart, was not his own. But was he ever the defender of a régime? Was he the man to embrace a cause thoroughly?

[1] Aus dem Nachlass von Villers, Isler.

No; his brain was too finely made not to be always ready to see the reverse of the medal. All régimes were good and bad for him, the only question under all forms of government was to defend and ensure liberty, always endangered. Three words were inscribed on his standard—moderation, tolerance, liberty.

Whatever régime promised to respect this device was the best for him. According to the feminine influence he was under, he leaned a little to one side or the other, but he was never entirely unfaithful to the ultimate object of his political beliefs. When Napoleon was already at Fontainebleau, Constant wrote a particularly vehement article in favour of the Bourbons. The last words of this article long lent a formidable weapon to his enemies: "I would not go," he said, "like a miserable turn-coat, dragging myself from one power to another, to cover infamy with sophism and stammer out unhallowed words to buy a shameful life."

Did Mme. de Staël guess who had pushed him into so monarchic a road? Perspicacity

is generally extremely lucid in lovers, and one can avouch that Corinne preserved a very tender feeling for Constant until her last moments. Her faithful friend, Mme. Récamier, was an old acquaintance of Constant. She had often been under the hospitable roof at Coppet at the same time as he. He was the first to be astonished at this suddenly awakened feeling. Did Mme. Récamier, who has so long been reproached with an absolute lack of intelligence, show here once more, by great discretion, that rare quality which, in default of intelligence, she united to her proverbial charm and beauty—an infinite delicacy and tact? However it may have been, this episode in the lives of the three friends cast no shadow on the mutual affection of "wit and beauty." Thus Talleyrand named Mme. de Staël and Mme. Récamier on being placed between them at table one day. "Here I am between wit and beauty," said he, and the doubtful compliment elicited this reply from "Wit": "But at this moment you have neither one nor the other." And this liveliest of dip-

Madame Récamier
From a photograph of a painting by Gerard

lomats, he who, Sieyès said, resembled an old woman who had just removed her rouge and patches, was obliged to swallow this well-merited rebuff.

The defence of the Bourbons was worth a smile of approbation from Mme. Récamier to Constant, tormented by inconceivable agitation, plagued by the coquetry of the "lovely angel," leaving her house a prey to "convulsions of pain and rage,"[1] having but one single idea, to return to her as soon as possible. "J'ai dit que Benjamin Constant faillit aimer tout à fait," wrote Anatole France, "c'est Mme. Récamier, avec sa figure d'ange et de pensionnaire, qui fit ce miracle."

A strangely violent passion had tardily filled this surfeited soul. It made him—for the first time, perhaps—cry out truly from his heart. An amorous madness possessed him. His letters to Mme. Récamier and his *Journal Intime* prove this.

As soon as Napoleon's return was known, the most solid heads shook. The public in

[1] *Journal Intime.*

general was as if struck by torpor—the prostration that seizes crowds before the unexpected exploits of genius. Benjamin cried,[1] "Great news! Bonaparte has returned. The break-up is terrible, my life is in danger. *Vogue la galère*; if we must perish, let us die bravely! What cowards these pure royalists are, who thought to present me as an enemy of this government! They tremble, and I am the only one who dares to write and propose to defend it. We shall have more to-morrow evening. . . . The news is growing, but everything is obscure as yet, except the conviction of every one that all is lost. I persist in believing that all might be saved, but time is flying. Mme. de Staël has left. . . ."

In fact, she was already at Coppet. She had known at once what would follow Napoleon's landing. Royalism in flight, the army in revolt, the people passive. It seems that she heard, with contained compassion, imprecations, menaces, promises, and the

[1] *Journal Intime.*

expression of hopes destroyed or suddenly re-awakened. She influenced none of her friends in compromising themselves, having no confidence in the stability of events which then were throwing France from one power to another—that France that she loved perhaps more than many of those who fought at the heads of parties. Proposals were made to her. She was offered an assured residence in Paris, and the repayment of sums that her father had lent to the nation. She remained incorruptible, left Paris at once, and went to Coppet. Constant complained a little at not having even been able to take leave of her, but he also distrusted the situation, and expected to see her return soon. He was undecided. What should he do? Remain in Paris? He allowed himself little by little to be drawn into the general panic, dared not spend the night in his own house, and took refuge with a friend, the American Minister, feeling more secure there.

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"[COPPET, March, 1815.]

"I implore you, by our old love for each other, to go at once. If you can go by Switzerland, I shall be very glad, but what I venture to demand is, your departure. Take a passport on which the baptismal name does not appear.

"God bless you."

But much was it a matter of the "old love"! The real matter was to remain as near Mme. Récamier as possible. He finally decided to start for Nantes, and while waiting for his horses he wrote a last letter to Mme. Récamier.[1]

"I take this resolution very much against my feelings," he told her, and those who read the other letters will take his word for it. He continues: "Just as I thought I was going to start, the interdict laid on post-horses deprived me of the means. I have only now recovered

[1] *Letters from Benj. Constant to Mme. Récamier.*

them, but this accident obliges me to leave my carriage and all my things. It is not much, but I have been obliged also to leave at No. 6 rue Neuve de Berry a large white box, full of books and papers of little interest, but among which are your letters. There is nothing in these letters, assuredly, that could render their publication annoying to you. However, you would doubtless prefer to prevent it, and I propose that you shall ask the ladies who occupy the apartment on the third floor to take care of the box. This will not expose you to any danger, for I am sure that, until now, no information has been received concerning me, and all will go off easily. I would, perhaps, have done better to stay. Ah, what would I not give to be able to talk with you a little! My feeling remains the same, but I do not wish to speak of it, to avoid emotion. Here is the order for my servant to give the box in question to the person who shall present this order.

"Adieu, adieu! When shall we see each other again?"

Later on, in 1828, Constant reminded Mme. Récamier of this letter in a note printed on another page of this volume. Did he believe that he had asked Mme. Récamier to remove Mme. de Staël's letters from this box? or did he make this an excuse for asking her if she had done it? Is the famous box which interested the Duchesse de Broglie later on in question, or some other? It might well be that Mme. de Constant had removed that part of its contents which particularly interested her, without Benjamin's knowledge, as we see in the preceding letter that he did not ask Mme. Récamier at the time to remove Mme. de Staël's letters with her own.

Constant soon realised his desire to see his "lovely angel" again. (This name had clung to her ever since the performance of a little play by Mme. de Staël, called "Agar," in which Mme. Récamier was really angelic as the angel.) She had remained in Paris, and thither he returned,—the more readily as he found, when he reached Nantes, that the department had declared for Napoleon, and

that he was no safer there than in Paris. He retraced his steps, and the noise of the cannon announcing the entry of Napoleon hardly roused him from his foolish passion, as his letters to Mme. Récamier prove.

Nights spent in tears and ecstasies, according to Mme. de Krüdner's prescription,[1] did not at all advance matters. Mme. de Staël wrote to him: "You are offending every one; you do not listen, you do not answer; if you go on in this manner you will not have one friend left. I no longer care about you. Your wife will give you up. And if it is a violent passion that has put you in this state, *the object of it will not respond!*" Would Mme. de Staël, however, have suspected it?

A "grand passion" always makes one in-

[1] Julianne, Baronne de Krüdner (1766–1824), daughter of Baron de Vietinghof (Livonia), lived, after her divorce, in Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. She made herself the centre of a group of mystics, when life no longer offered her the pleasures she had enjoyed so freely. Constant fell somewhat under her influence, or, rather, he appealed to her and her mysticism to assail that impregnable fortress, the heart of Mme. Récamier.

different to all but the object of it. Love makes one forget personal safety, for it one risks life itself. But things were not quite at that pass. Constant was too keen not to foresee that the Napoleon of the island of Elba was no longer the tyrant of former days; that he would be obliged to use tact with people, and to give a free and representative government to France, who had had time during the Bourbon interregnum to perceive the possibility of safety for the country otherwise than under the iron hand of the master. He remained quietly at home for several days, and Mme. Récamier used the velvet glove to console the poor man for all that his adoration for her had really brought on him. To pass the time more agreeably, he threw himself energetically into his favourite vice—gambling.

Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant de Rebecque ("Rue Neuve de Berry, No. 6, Fge. du Rouille, Paris.")

7 April [Coppet, 1815].

"How painful it is to see a man like you

behave so foolishly through love of play. You know that sooner or later your aunt will disinherit you for this, and you have no fear, at your age, that every one will say you were quite willing. There is no more reason than dignity in this, and God grant that the need of money all your life may not expiate your momentary passion.

"Mon Dieu, how absurd it is! I have seen no one here who can or will excuse or approve of you. I would say much more if it could do any good, but you have only one idea in your head, and the passion that dominates you will never pass, because you will never attain its end, and you have never known anything but difficulty in this world. I pity you, and I am irritated, I admit, at the harm your ruin will do me, when it will be so thoroughly your own fault! Enough of that.

"When I knew positively that the Emperor had been kind enough to say that he was very pleased at my silence during this year, and at my conduct towards him, and that I could return, I wrote to the Minister

of Police and to Prince Joseph [1] to tell them that my wish was not to return to Paris, but that the title of my annuity be not refused, since my daughter's marriage depends on it. In fact I believe that he insists on it, since for fifteen days we have not had a word from Victor.[2] Do not mention this to any one, above all to Madame R.,[3] but send me word of what you know about it. I have not been able to tell her what you would do if I were not paid, and, generally, I should find it sad for so charming a person to be bargained for.

"If she were not in question I would not speak a word to you on business, for I consider your fortune lost if you continue your Parisian life. Listen to me as to a prediction, if you no longer believe me as a friend. Do you know that Mme. Cachet lives in Geneva?"

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[1] Joseph Bonaparte.

[2] Duc de Broglie, future son-in-law of Mme. de Staël.

[3] Mme. Récamier, perhaps.

Letter from Mme. de Staël to Benjamin Constant

"16 April [COPPET, 1815].[1]

"I have received a letter from you in which you do not tell me a word about Victor, but what is still more surprising is the fact that since Auguste's arrival we have not received a word from him. This is so strange that I cannot account for it.

"I beg you, *in case* this marriage takes place and I do not receive any money, to be so good as to pay 40,000 francs, or an income of 2000 francs.

"Even if I should combine all my means, I could not exceed 100,000 francs, because my losses in Italy are complete, I have undergone some in England, and the total is menaced. Try to find out (without speaking to any one in the world) how it is that Victor behaves in such an unaccountable manner. Try to talk with him.

"I will not speak to you of politics. I

[1] Letter published in German by A. Strodtmann, *Dichterprofile*.

should not know how to *stammer out unhallowed words.*[1] If it is true that you are working on the Constitution, I advise you to think more of the guaranties than of the explanation of rights. Prince Joseph[2] has written me the kindest letter in the world. He says he does not *Doubt* the *Success* of my claim. It is the only thing I wish, above all on account of the postponement of this marriage.

"My health does not permit of my staying in Paris, and I need the Midi to live. I do not know, therefore, when we shall see each other again. Ah! if you could be happy and reasonable! It is hard that at our age, one can do without the other.

"You must write to me at Geneva so that the letter will reach me sooner.

[Address:]

"M. Benjamin Constant,

"No. 2 Rue Neuve du Berry. Paris."

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[1] Quoted in derision from the famous article in the *Journal des Débats* of 19th March.

[2] Joseph Bonaparte.

VII

A MONTH had not elapsed since the famous diatribe of the *Journal des Débats*, before the Emperor had won Benjamin Constant to his cause. Napoleon's famous power of enveloping and conquering all minds that came in contact with his own was not at fault on this occasion, when the Emperor put forth all his will, and that of Mme. de Staël was absent, the only one that could keep in the straight path this mind that had become vacillating, by dint of cold and penetrating analysis. The Emperor engaged him to draw up the Constitution. He worked on it with sincere love. He was no longer as in his youth, when he was as disillusioned as an old man. All that had been uprooted by generous enthusiasm, and a wonderful transformation had taken

place under the hand of Mme. de Staël. At twenty-four his weak and tender heart and his bitter wit had seen in the Revolution only "an excess of infamy," which inspired him with such disgust that he "no longer heard the words humanity, liberty, and fatherland without a desire to vomit." [1] At forty-seven we see him giving all his talent and intelligence to ensure respect for liberty and fatherland. This constitution, according to Chateaubriand, was "the improved charter." The public nicknamed it "Benjamine."

Letter from Mme. de Staël to Benjamin Constant

"17th April [COPPET, 1815].

"You will have seen by my letters by post that I should have preferred you to act differently. You are a better judge than I, but it seems to me that an interval was necessary, and that a journey satisfied it. But enough of that.

[1] Letters to Mme. Charrière, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1844.

"Yesterday, I saw Lucien,[2] who is still waiting to return to Paris. I will do the same, unless it is necessary on account of business; but as I am now, politically, like Nicolle in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and as I go straight to the point, it seems to me that the Emperor himself must find it best for me not to return until the Constitution is finished, or until he shall have finished with constitutions.

"My interest is my payment. There are a thousand money difficulties that I cannot remove from my marriage. If I am not paid, Auguste will go, and I will go and will do all I can for what my children really need. If all my efforts are vain, I beg of you to put 40,000 francs at Albertine's disposal, with Fourcault, or 2000 francs revenue. My son takes with him the act made between us, and he will give it to you in exchange for your signature.

[1] Lucien Bonaparte, Prince of Canino, younger brother of Napoleon, and a great friend of Mme. de Staël.

"I repeat, if I am not paid before Albertine's contract, the sole service you can render me will be to tell the All-Powerful that my liquidation is according to law, that a contract is founded on this liquidation, and that it is absolutely the same as the sale of the woods that the Emperor has rectified. There is, besides, no question of expense, but only to have the Minister of Finance put at the bottom, *The liquidation herein mentioned is approved.* For the rest, speak to Auguste. I do not reproach myself for asking you to look after Albertine's interests. You know very well that I do not care much for the royalist party.

"If the Emperor gives liberty, he will be for me the . . . [illegible] legitimate, but since the . . . [illegible] journey to Antibes, however, I do not know who could resist him to his face. I am less capable of it now than formerly; judge, then, of the nation. In short, I think of nothing but my poor Albertine! But the complication of duty, engagements, and feelings is a

torture of which you know nothing. I am sorry to accept the sacrifice of 40,000 francs that you will make to my interests, but in truth, if the marriage takes place and my payment is not made, their situation will necessitate it. That *alone* can determine me to ask it of you, as you know.

"May you be happy in your way; I should have wished it to be in mine."

Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant.

"[COPPET] 17th April [1815].[1]

"Why must I write to you first? I begged you, on my departure, and to make it a sort of duty to you, I begged you, besides, to keep me informed of all news concerning my great affair. You have allowed three weeks to elapse without writing a line,—and now you inform me of what they have said to Auguste. That is not all. You write me two pages in the manner of an acquittal of conscience. 'They say that the Duc de Broglie is thinking of your daughter.' She

[1] Letter published by A. Strodtmann, *Dichterprofile*.

herself is much hurt at this flippancy apropos of such a matter.

"Auguste will probably have told you that. However, I would have given, I cannot say what, for one word more on so important a subject. M. de Broglie is just the man among all others whom I desire for my daughter and I cannot conceive how one can treat such a subject so lightly. I know that, since you are no longer bored, I am nothing to you. Since the day that you spoke to the Prince of Sweden,[1] the tone of your letters has changed, though nothing was different then from what it is now, except that I was the beautiful Angelie,[2] and that I am for you a remorseful conscience that is only felt when one is unhappy. I have the faculty of reading in the depths of the heart. But write me about Albertine, and try to preserve as much feeling as is necessary for your talent.

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[1] Mme. de Staël, a great friend of the Prince of Sweden, might have been useful to him then; he alludes to it himself in his *Journal Intime*.

[2] The abandoned lover; an allusion to the heroic opera, *Roland*, by Philippe Quinault.

"Your letter in the *Journal des Débats* was almost the same as the one you addressed to me in the last edition; that is to say, when you had to think of something else.

"M. Rocca has received neither your pamphlet[1] nor his Thucydides.

"I should willingly have the second edition of the 'Liberty of the Press' despatched; you could have it ordered for me at Geneva. M. de Montbuissieur Malesherbes' letter has irritated me more than I can say, and you know the feelings that have agitated me on reading it. Thank God, my father will not have to endure such an apology! I have done well to absent myself. When do you advise me to return, and should I choose Clichy, or an apartment in town? Advise me about this. I am in agreeable English society here. I have taken a liking to

[1] A pamphlet of Constant's, "De la liberté des brochures, des pamphlets, et des journaux consideré sous les rapports de l'intérêt du gouvernment," or "Observations sur le discours prononce par S. E. le Ministre de l'Intérieur en faveur du projet de la loi sur la liberté de la presse."

Coppet, now that I am here of my own free will. I ask much of Heaven, addressing myself to my saints. Do you remember that you were a mystic? Have you really written that the liberty of the press ought not to attack republicanism? They say so in Geneva, where the people are aristocrats à la Calvin, or in a still more unliberal manner.

"Adieu: write to me.

"Swiss affairs will run a peaceful course and the nineteen cantons will remain."

Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"30th April [1815][1]

"The Constitution has satisfied me—I have, however, some objections to make to it.

"What will the councillors of State be? Are they responsible or inviolable? What does their presence in the Constitution signify? What will the peers be? Everything has not been said in pronouncing this word? A military chamber would not be a guaranty of liberty. Will not the administration of the provinces be confided to men elected by

[1] Letter published by A. Strodtmann, *Dichterprofile.*

the people? However it may be, one must praise what is praiseworthy, and I can well understand that you are pleased to have participated in it—but what you tell me of your feeling of gratification does not seem to me to be derived entirely from the conscience. To give voice to good principles is always a great thing. Principles sometimes govern men, more than men are masters of them. You know better than any one else what can be said of that which touches you. I myself am inclined to understand everything, except what relates to a lack of sentiment, and in that you were not bound. I take the liberty of telling you that your conduct in my affair is much less pardonable.

"You promised, on the occasion of my daughter's marriage, to pay 40,000 of the 80,000 francs. I promised these 40,000 francs to M. d'Argenson,[1] who reminds me of it in

[1] Marc René d'Argenson, second husband of the Duchesse de Broglie, mother of Victor, had become an orphan at the age of ten. Possessor of a large fortune and titled estates, hereditary Governor of Vincennes, lieutenant, general, bailiff of Touraine, this blueblooded

his last letter to Victor, who must have this sum to get settled. What can I say except that you are now renouncing your obligations? Our arrangement, as you know, is only a present that means nothing. Think, then, of your position. How has it changed since your promise in Paris, if not for the better? In your last letter but one, you tell me that you made this promise to me and Albertine, believing that you would be a Deputy. Now, you are a Councillor of State, which brings more. Tell Fourcault, then, to yield a part of the unpaid debts to Mme. du . . . [illegible].

"You come to me now with the tale that your position cannot last? What does it matter to me what you do, or do not do, at

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aristocrat had all his life been a republican, and an implacable liberal. Aide-de-camp to Lafayette, a member of the Breton Club, and in danger under the Terror, he retired to his estates and occupied himself solely with their amelioration, and with that of the whole province. He was a most devoted father to his adopted children. Deputy in 1815, a fine orator, and of exceedingly independent mind, he retired from office for the second and last time in 1835.

another time, when it is now only a matter of fifteen days during which my daughter's future must be decided. We once had a correspondence which lasted for six months, during which you threatened every day to pay me by a mortgage on Vallombreuse.[1] You have lost nothing since, and I proved to you then that I wished to make you a present of everything, if I were the only one in question—but now that my daughter's fate is concerned, I, as a mother, must conduct this affair with all the necessary insistence. These are disagreeable things that I will not mention again if you get my money, and it seems to me that you could easily persuade the Emperor that, if there is now a liquidation — proportionate to last year's — they should act according to the principle on which I urge my pretensions. Besides, they *would have* executed the article of the Constitution which declares that *all posses-*

[1] A property that Constant possessed in common with a relation. This property apparently had been bought by Mme. de Staël. If so, she must have made a present of it to Benj. Constant.

sions acquired on the foundation of a law are inviolable. My liquidation is an acquired possession, and it only depends on you to persuade the Emperor that I am a person over whom gratitude has always had more power, than any remembrance whatever, and that I desire you with all my heart to remain faithful to the Constitution. On that depends the esteem in which you will be held. Think, I conjure you, of Albertine's position, of my uneasiness on the subject, and consider it natural that, at such a time, all the means at my disposal should be employed for her. Love her then, her at least. Adieu."

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"15 May [1815].

"I do not know how to reply to your letter; it passes all that I believed of the human heart. The laws of this country concern you, as well as me, and I will fight here, but if I must lose, I shall have the bitter satisfaction of gathering together facts that will excite deep pity for a person so unhappy as to have

been attached to you for fifteen years! You dare to make use of the generosity I showed you when I loved you, as of a right? And what do you say of the promise you made me in Paris, which you remember from your last letter but one? You say that my children will have the greater part of your fortune, after you. Yours! Mine; since I lend you the 80,000 francs without interest during your life, if that maintains an agreement none of whose conditions you have fulfilled, and which is not legal, since it is not authorised.

"If I had not promised this money to M. d'Argenson according to *your promise*, twice repeated in Paris, I would leave you, all that you do, and all that you are; but if I can, I will make you keep your promise. If I cannot, the conduct of each of us will at least become known; that will complete your memoirs. You know that a part of this money was advanced by me to your father—yet you treated him as you treat me.

"As to your fortune, I cannot conceive

why you tell me what is false, when I know it as I know my own. You are to-day richer than I, you have no one to take care of, are under obligations to no one whatsoever. So you have no excuse for an action, your motives for which revolt me more than the action itself. I beg you, as you say so well, not to *oblige me*. You owe me 80,000 francs. Pay me half of it, and leave me without any further dealings with you.

"You dated the 15th May; I advise you to be fortunate, for, at present, adversity would not become you."[1]

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"COPPET, 25th May [1815].[2]

"If it only concerned me, I should continue to make you a present of what I have lent you, as I was foolish enough to at other

[1] Benj. Constant writes in his journal: "Letter received from Mme. de Staël. She would like me to do nothing for my fortune, and to give her the little I have (charming combination)."

[2] *Dichterprofile.*

times—but you are to be blamed for the fact that my daughter's marriage cannot take place. The blame is yours because you promised 40,000 francs, and because this sum figures in the contract. I neglected to make you sign it, but as you talk to me of letters, I have one that contains this promise, in which you beg me on bended knee to allow you to participate in Albertine's happiness! What a man, who being to-day in fortunate circumstances,—O, unfortunate that we are! —does not try to be useful to my daughter! What a man, who does as much harm to a child as he has done to her mother! What a man! Imagination shudders with horror at such a proof! Every one will judge your conduct as I do, but at the moment of death, the remembrance of your past life will make you shudder. However, all is over between you and me; between you and Albertine, between you and whoever is still capable of feeling. In future I shall only speak to you through lawyers, and as my daughter's guardian. Adieu.

[Address:] "To M. Benjamin de Constant,
"Councillor of State,
"No. 2 Rue Neuve de Berry,
"Paris.
"Faubourg du Roule."

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"COPPET, 28th May [1815].

"I did not wish to write to you again on this horrible subject, but the letters my son brought me demand a last reply. You threaten me with *my letters*. This last trait is worthy of you, worthy of you! To threaten a woman with intimate letters which may compromise her and her family, so as not to pay her the money one owes her, that is a trait lacking to M. de S. . . . [illegible]. Doubtless, if that is your intention, as Albertine would suffer and my son be amazed by it, when he has proved to the eyes of Europe that you owe me 80,000 francs,—of which, *34 to my father* by inheritance, 18 on your note for Vallombreuse, with interest for ten years,—I will declare that a woman

cannot expose herself to a man's threats of publishing her letters, and this new manner . . . [illegible] of enriching oneself will be known, for, before you, no one has dared to conceive it. This lack of means that you proclaim, after having gambled as you did all the winter, is a mockery.

"It pleases you to say that I will not embarrass myself for Albertine, forgetting that exile has reduced my fortune by half, and that I am charged with 20,000 francs of pensions, including Schlegel and Mlle. Reudal.[1] But that does not matter. You owe me 80,000 francs; your absurd agreement is proof of it. You offered me the half; my daughter is witness of this, and the subject of the contract proves it.

"Besides, when I have the signature of all the lawyers in this country, if you threaten

[1] Miss Reudal, a devoted friend of Mme. de Staël. She became acquainted with her probably in Lyons in 1809, became much attached to her, and from that time they did not leave each other again until the death of Mme. de Staël who bequeathed to her a fine diamond and an income.

me with my letters, I am ready to have it said in the Tribunal that this threat has suspended proceedings.

"So, if you are capable of a cowardice which is worse than a theft, I wish this cowardice to be known. But it will stop me, at least for a time, for I find this conduct so atrocious, and know perfectly that neither the honour, nor the friendship, nor the despair that you have thrown over my life, nor the harm that you do to my daughter,—that none of this is anything to you, and that money alone rules your political and private life. I shall try to make you return what you owe me, because I know that should my daughter and I die of grief to-morrow, it would hurt you much less than having paid your debts. Your malignity robs you of intelligence. You write me that you wanted to break with me, *and that I held you by* . . .[1] of money. I believe it, but it is iniquitous to say it, as your intelligence tells you sometimes what you are. But take care, you

[1] A piece of the letter is missing here.

have overworked the power of your talents; they will no longer save you from your character; it is too well known now. Albertine, not less wounded than I am, will testify to the offer you made her in Paris, and your place as Councillor of State cannot have changed it. You told Auguste that Mme. Dureuse did not pursue you. Well then, I take Mme. Dureuse's credit, all or in part.

"Besides, it is not a question of being right; you know the truth as well as I. But what you know less well is that the unhappiness I owed to you, *the horror of the recollections of my youth*, entirely devastated by your frightful temper, have given me a firmness of will that during twenty years, if I. . . .[1] I should follow the suit which is going to begin. Adieu."

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"COPPET, 12th June [1815].

"You tell me that I am an inferior person,

[1] Here, also, a piece of the letter is missing.

and to give me an example of moderation you quote the Latin passage . . .[1] *spretæque injuria formæ*, which you think the most insulting of all for a woman; but you deceive yourself. A person who has given all her youth to a man who has destroyed her future, as the inventor of torture by slow fire could do, this person is no longer capable of self-respect. If you had treated the ugliest and stupidest servant who had loved you as I loved you, as you have treated me, you would still be what you are,—the most profoundly bitter and indelicate man on earth to-day. You tell me that for six thousand years women have complained of men who have not loved them. But for six thousand years, also, men have loved money, and I do not think you have shown yourself indifferent to it in the past two months. If you think that I should pay you for the pleasure of your conversation! . . . does my father owe you 34,000 francs for that! You tell me that my sadness made more impression on you formerly. Will you

[1] Incomprehensible. Aeneide I, 27

tell me if it prevented you marrying, in spite of a promise of marriage made to me, and taking to another, unknown to me, the fortune that you held from my father and me?

You declare that *you will speak ill of me.* I am sorry to tell you, but I have ten letters that conjure me to note that I no longer have any relations with you. If you do not know how to attack others any better than to defend yourself, you are not to be feared. Besides, if you were, do you think that you could wound me anew? There is not one spot in my heart that has not been ravaged by your persistent hatred.

"I took refuge in the past; you found it necessary to tell my daughter and myself that you had never loved a woman . . . [illegible], the miserable insinuations of a roué, which you might have spared Albertine's innocence. Finally, after your having taken from me these young days, in which, whatever you may say, I was worthy of a heart in return for mine, I wished still to retain a tie with you by the service that you could

have rendered my daughter. Misfortune has struck her at eighteen years of age! One would think that all who have known you must suffer, and that you embody some perverse, supernatural power. You, who buy houses, and pay for them with your winnings, as you have told me,—you who go every evening to the foreign salons,—you do not know how to make a sacrifice for the daughter of a person who gave up to you 80,000 francs, which she would give her to-day, if she had them.

"I will give my poor child all that I am able to, and Heaven is my witness that, threatened with extraordinary danger the other day, I consoled myself with the thought that my death would augment her dowry. But I had promised what you had promised me, and I could not fulfil it. I have been told that the act that you made me sign, which you drew up and wrote yourself, is not legal; we shall see. But what I know is, that your pretended legacy, without mortgage or other guaranty, cannot marry Albertine. If

you had made a deed with Fourcault to give her the bare ownership of 80,000 francs, invested in real estate—I do not know if that was valuable—you would then have been able to give the interest on it to Albertine only as long as you held your place! . . . In fact, if you lost it, you would be very unfortunate, but you would get something yourself. As for me, since I have seen in our liaison only a fate brought on me by the vengeance of hell, I am pursued by the idea that apparently I deserve it, that my father himself has not been able to obtain forgiveness for me.

"In short, I suffer in not being able to think of you but as a being charged with my punishment. I suffer as much as when I loved you. If I can reconcile myself with God, after having *reproached* you, I will *perhaps become softer*. But, at this moment, *I would fly crying from any place whatsoever where I might meet you*, and it would be a pleasure to me to say so in the face of all the world.

"These are my feelings, but, as it is a

matter now of my daughter only, if you can offer me an advantageous arrangement for her, I will accept it."

Between the letter of 12th June, and the one following, written on the 21st, the battle of Waterloo took place (after which Mme. de Staël wrote, paraphrasing Francis I., "Nothing is lost but honour"); and the abdication of Napoleon, and the second Restoration occurred. Constant, who, after the return from Elba, had turned his coat, as we know, found himself a second time in a very bad way, and feared to be exiled. His pen saved him from it. As soon as the King arrived in Paris, he wrote him a letter of self-justification. It made the desired impression. The King, with his own hand, struck Constant's name from the list of exiles, on which it had already been written. With the keen spirit of mockery that did not spare even himself, Constant, when he heard this, said, "My memorial has persuaded the King, though it failed to convince me myself!"

We read in a letter of 29th July, 1815, to his cousin Rosalie de Constant[1]: "Mme. de Staël has written me a more friendly letter than I expected, renouncing her claims to my fortune, which these latter events have not repaired." We do not believe we possess this letter of renunciation to which Constant alludes. That of the 21st July, which we publish, seems as if it must be one of those that followed it.

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"COPPET, 21st July [1815].

"I wish that you believed that I am better disposed to you than I was. There are points, surely, on which we are in sympathy, but it seems to me that the conduct of the ministry must appear good to you, and one cannot apparently prevent oneself from hoping at present for the maintenance of the King and of France; there is hope for the one only by the other. I do not know what

[1] *Letters of Benj. Constant to his Family*, J. H. Menos.

I shall do. Write me of the state of Paris: that will decide me. I have a desire for Italy, so as to let pass all this crowd of foreigners, which makes me feel bad, no matter what good it may have been able to do me. I advise two things for you, to get elected if you can, and, if you cannot, to finish your work on 'Religions,' and to publish it. They say Mme. de Constant has written to Rosalie[1] for news of you. Mme. de Loys[2] and others will give you a good reception.

"The Landammann Pidou[3] says that

[1] See what follows the letter.

[2] Mme. de Loys, younger sister of the Comtesse de Nassau, née de Chaudieu, and an aunt of Benj. Constant.

[3] Landammann, an officer of the Swiss government. Since 1513 Switzerland has been a confederation of thirteen cantons. Some were little city-republics; others were country-cantons, and their chiefs were Landammanns. Also in the constitution of Malmaison (1801) an analogous thing was accepted. The Helvetian Republic was declared one and individable and was represented by a diet charged with the election of the Senate, from which was taken the first magistrate of the country. The latter, qualified as Landammann of the Helvetian Republic, was invested with executive power, with the assistance of several ministers. The Pidous were a Vaudois family.

since Montesquieu[1] there has been no work as strong as yours.

"Your talent will always sustain you. I advise you to go to Paris if you can, for it is more difficult to return here, but one must not exaggerate the hatred of parties; time appeases them.

"My son will soon see you. I hope that he will be paid, and then I shall be anxious to prove to you, by consultation with the secretary, that I was right, legally, against you; but that is no longer the question at present.

"May you be happy still, in your way. Write to me."

Rosalie de Constant, whose life appeared a short time ago, in a book which gave a life-like picture of the epoch comprised between the years 1775 and 1835,[2] was a rather important personage in the Constant family. She was a cousin-german of

[1] The author of *Persia Letters*.

[2] *Rosalie de Constant, her Family and Friends*, by Lucie Achard. Ch. Eggimann and Co., publishers: Geneva, 1892.

Benjamin, and more than that, a faithful friend with whom he kept up throughout his life an almost uninterrupted correspondence.[1] She was the daughter of Samuel Constant and Charlotte Pictet, whose marriage was made by Voltaire's niece, Mme. Denis.

Witty, well educated, sometimes a little romantic, but full of good sense, more passionate in her friendships than in her antipathies, she seems to have been at bottom very kind, with a tongue sometimes sharp, as those of humpbacks generally are. She had this misfortune, and besides does not seem to have had many amiable traits. She knew, however, how to engage by her charm, and above all by her superior wit, the friendship of many men of repute, among whom were Bernadin de St. Pierre, M. de Bonstettin, Chateaubriand, General de Geyenses, and M. de Montesquieu. She played a part in the friendship of Constant and Mme. de

[1] This correspondence has been published by M. J. H. Menos.

Staël. The confidant of her cousin, and always informed of the vicissitudes of this long attachment, she seems sometimes to have served as a lightning-conductor for the flashes emitted by "the volcano," of which she complained bitterly in a letter to her brother. On the other hand, she was a very good friend to Mme. de Staël, who, for her part, was much attached to her, and does not seem to have been too annoyed at the frankness with which Mlle. Rosalie sometimes entertained her acquaintances.

Letter from Albertine to M. Benjamin Constant

"2d August [1815, COPPET].

"I am very much surprised, my dear friend, that in the fifteen days we have been here we have had no letters from you. It seems to me that, at such a time as the present, when you know that my mother desires to learn details of her own affairs, and of what is happening in Paris, it is the duty of a friend to write.

"You are friendly when you are present,

but in absence, when you are not bored, you forget your friends. My mother is well, as far as her health goes, at Coppet, but she is uneasy at what is happening over there, and would like to have news. I am very happy at Coppet. I run, I ride, and I feel, with much pleasure, that I do not miss Paris at all. Only *one thing* is necessary in life, as in religion, and one is happy in being independent of all the rest. One cannot be here again without being reminded of you in a thousand ways. If you were here, would you not feel that one must try to make up, by care in little things, for the irreparable harm one has done in a great matter? Many things are missing at Coppet. You amuse me so much when I am with you that I cannot feel any ill will toward you, but at a distance I am less complaisant.

"The Bernese speak of re-establishing everything, and wish to take the new cantons by right of devotion, but the canton of Vaud is not listening to them; they are nearly all French here. Sismondi has re-

turned from Italy, revolted at the persecutions they have to suffer there.[1]

"There are some rather agreeable English people here. Besides, we are again in the society of our neighbours, and I fear that the world has perverted me, for I no longer enjoy so much General Froissard's wit. People of this kind have one advantage, however; they remind me of my old thoughts, like an old piece of furniture that I have not seen for a long time. They are nothing of themselves, but to see them again takes me back two years.

"Tell Gen. La Fayette that I think of him very often, and beg him not to forget me. He is the only just one of Sodom to whom I

[1] Jean Charles Sismondi, of a family of Huguenot refugees at Geneva, was much appreciated as a historian in his day. (*Histoire de Français*, 29 vols., *Histoires des républiques italiennes*, etc.) Benj. Constant tried to get him over to Napoleon, on his return from Elba; he seemed willing, but as he was not a Frenchman the attempt was reduced to some articles in the *Moniteur* in defence of the additional act, which made a very bad impression in Geneva, where he was a member of the Representative Council. Mme. de Staël's friendship had opened the salons of Paris to him.

ask you to speak of me. You are certainly not one of the just, however, as I have told you. You please me as an old and new acquaintance at the same time. I do not understand you. I believe that no one is necessary to you. You need your friends' intellects, but not themselves. Five agreeable but indifferent people are more to you than the best friends. Adieu. Write to me.

"ALBERTINE."

Mme. de Staël wrote these words at the foot of her daughter's letter:

"Your silence has wounded me; I did not expect it—it is too much."

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"11th August [1815].

"Your justification is perfect, and I felt crushed on reading it. There is no possibility of attacking you legally. None but your friends can be afflicted at the extreme mobility of your character; you have excellent answers

for your enemies. As to me, if I went to Paris, do you doubt that I would see you as before? If I have been able to forgive your conduct to me, would the considerations of society influence me? But if I can avoid seeing France in the condition she now is in, I earnestly desire to. If I could flatter myself that, having praised the Germans so much in their adversity, they would listen to me in their hour of triumph, I would go, not to keep quiet, but to speak, for I know of nothing that can smother what is in my soul.

"But so many people in France must make them hear the truth, that it would be presumptuous to believe myself more fortunate than another. I am, then, awaiting the result of my affair, and devoting myself wholly to Albertine's future. It is my intention to go to Rome, where we shall get the dispensation ourselves. Perhaps she will be married at St. Peter's. Coppet is still more holy.

"I have shown your memorial, but in accordance with your orders, it has not left my

hands. Every one says that except for the article of the 19th there would be nothing to say against you. It is the brilliance of your own talent that has done you harm. God willed that you should have everything in your hands, and that a wicked fairy should make you throw it all away. Have courage, however, above all in the cause of France; do not abandon yourself, and make for yourself steadfast principles. Assuredly Mirabeau and several others have recalled them from a greater distance than you. Party spirit will cool by degrees and the great . . . [illegible] of your life, love of liberty and talent, will reappear.

"Avoid duels; at present they would signify nothing. Society is a small thing at present; the business of the world is greater. Endure what you have not, as you have made such a great effort to relieve yourself of what you had. Your letters are of great interest to me; just now we agree; let us profit by it to write to each other. Give my son good advice about my affair. Do not think

any more of the one that was in question between us."[1]

"18th August [COPPET, 1815].

"When you saw that I would return to your neighbourhood, the tone of your letters changed, and those that you wrote me from Paris to London wounded me deeply. When I returned I found you like your letters: not a look, not an inflection betrayed any recollection, and I admired you sometimes for being so witty, and at the same time so little inspired. That hurt me; but it was better, for fifteen years of such deep feeling are a cruel wound that could be made to bleed only too easily. But let us drop that.

"The rejection of the liberty of the press, and what they have said of England, have revived my old error; but let us drop that also. I only wish to be paid, and I shall be very grateful. I wish it for Albertine; she is so agreeable, she improves so much that there is nothing she does not deserve. I

[1] That of the 80,000 francs that Constant owed her.

have told you that what I hope for is Victor de Broglie. Try to speak of her before him. One can praise her, certainly, without exaggerating. Her face is still more beautiful, and all the English here are enthusiastic about it.

"The Humboldt[1] family is here, three daughters, a son, a tutor, and the mother; she is very agreeable, but her daughter is horrible. The Princess of Wales should arrive here next month, but I have no desire to wait for her. Let me know when you think I can return.

"When will the peace[2] deliberations be ended? I do not know why they should take long. I am still uneasy about my affairs, and I would like to be there to watch them.

[1] Charles Guillaume, Baron de Humboldt, 1767–1835, a distinguished scientist and statesman, Ambassador to Rome, then to London and Vienna. His house was an artistic and scientific centre wherever he was. A brother of the celebrated Alexander de Humboldt, he was also a member of almost all of the scientific societies and academies of his day.

[2] After the hundred days, Louis XVIII. returned to Paris under the protection of the Duke of Wellington, 19th July, 1815.

Will Mme. de Constant soon be in Paris? [1] I have seen your family. Nothing has changed here but the faces. The minds are also a little faded, but otherwise all is well.

"General Filangieri [2] has been here. He made it known to me that he wished to marry Albertine, but it was when she was so young, that it was not worth while answering. I believe he has the same wish, but he has put on a Bonapartist air. Apropos, do you know that the Genevans are very illiberal? They . . . [illegible] the acceptance of their bad constitution like little tyrants,

[1] Mme. de Constant could not rejoin her husband, because it would have been necessary to pass the allied armies before Paris, which would have made the journey very distressing.

[2] Charles Filangieri, Duc de Taormina, Prince of Latriano, son of the author of *La Scienza della Legislazione*. He was presented when young to Napoleon, who, in consideration of his father's merits, caused him to be brought up (being an orphan) at the country's expense. On leaving college he joined the forty officers who accompanied Napoleon to Milan for his coronation. He performed prodigies of valour at the battle of Austerlitz, and was aide-de-camp to Murat. Governor of Sicily at Napoleon's downfall, he ended his career, covered with honour, in the service of Ferdinand de Bourbon.

and fear intelligence as if they were in great danger. It is comical and sad, like the world in miniature.

"I have written to tell Auguste that I believe it would be better if our name were not pronounced before the legislative body. What do you think?"

The Broglie family originated in Piedmont. Several of its members were Marshals of France. Victor Charles de Broglie, of whom Mme. de Staël speaks here (1785–1870), was the son of Claude Victor, who was guillotined in 1794; his mother escaping a similar fate thanks to Mme. de Staël. They were united by strong ties of friendship, and it was Mme. de Broglie, then Mme. d'Argenson, who finally overcame the objections raised by the Broglie family to the marriage with Albertine de Staël, which they looked upon as a *mésalliance*. There still remained the lack of fortune, for the Broglies were not rich, and these letters show us how Mme. de Staël made every effort to remove this obstacle.

This young man began his diplomatic career without brilliance. As a peer of France, he belonged, under the Restoration, to the liberal opposition; in 1830, under Louis Philippe, he was Minister of Public Worship, and later he became Minister of Foreign Affairs, and President of the Council of State. After the death of his wife, which was an irreparable loss to him, and the "Coup d'État" of December, 1851, he retired from political life. In his Souvenirs, the Duke speaks of himself in these terms: "My feelings were healthy, my intentions right, my opinions sensible" (has one ever met a man with a better opinion of himself?). "Without scorning or speaking ill of the 'ancien régime,' all attempts to restore it appeared puerile to me. I belonged at heart, and by conviction, to the new order of things; I sincerely believed in its unlimited progress. While detesting revolution, the disorders it brings, and the crimes that stain it, I regarded the French Revolution, 'in globo,' as an inevitable and salutary crisis. Politically,

I regarded the government of the United States as the future of civilised nations, and the British monarchy as the government of the present time. I hated despotism, and saw in the administrative monarchy only a state of transition." There was in all this, doubtless, much youthfulness, and some dreaming, but nothing radically false, nothing that could not be rectified by time and reflection, nothing incompatible with loyal and regular conduct.

Letter from Mme. de Staël to M. Benjamin Constant

"1st September [1815].

"The state of your health causes me much uneasiness, my dear friend; I can bear anything from you just now except your illness. I have found at the bottom of my heart, on pronouncing that word, emotions that I had believed to be extinct. You have been very foolish and very cruel, but you have a unique mind and faculties, and you owe it to the God who has made you thus to take scrupulous care of yourself. You can always count

on my daughter and myself as friends, not such as we wished to be, but such as you have permitted us to be, and you will end by finding it is still the best of what you have.

"M. de Langallerie,[1] who is here, bids me tell you that he has repeated to me all the conversations he had with you. Alas! What is the use? Your paper, that I lend, is much admired here by the English, and those of the Genevans who know how to read. I get word from Paris that it is very successful. Yours is a fine career, if you can teach

[1] The Chevalier General de Langallerie, a distant relation of Benj. Constant, was one of the chiefs of the group of mystics, presided over by Mme. de Krüdener, to which Benj. Constant had belonged for a short time. The Duc de Broglie gives a perfect picture of this person in his Souvenirs: "A little man—very round, very short, rather vain, slightly greedy, almost the same as the ribald stories of the last century showed the confessor of a convent, or director of the pious. It was difficult to restrain a smile when one heard him groaning about his poor stomach while doing justice to a good dinner, and over insomnia when one heard him happily snoring in a comfortable armchair. His gentle, insinuating, nasal voice was most provoking, but as soon as he was launched on pure spirituality, it was impossible not to admire the profundity and delicacy of his ideas."

liberty to France. You tell me that every one writes that I shall be paid. I hope so also. Fear has become so much a habit to me, that I would not spend a louis for these two millions. If they come, I hope that M. de Broglie will think of me. You see that I am modest. If you can help in this, do so. I rely entirely on your pride and your zeal in what concerns Albertine.

"You have written Charles de Constant [1] that you would perhaps stop here on your way to Germany. I hope that is only talk, for I dare to hope that you will not go. You would have the air either of being an exile, or of having failed in an attempt, if you went at present.

"I expect to start on the 15th September; you can write to me here before that. Do

[1] Charles de Constant, his cousin and brother of Rosalie, to whom he wrote: "I hope to see you soon, for it is possible that I may go to Germany by way of Switzerland, if my wife does not join me by the end of next month. They say the roads on the shores of the Rhine are not very safe. Peace is not quite assured; every one desires it, but that is no reason for its consummation" (*Letters of Benj. Constant to his Family*, J. H. Menos).

not forget, but address by Geneva, and not by Switzerland, which retards things. Let me have exact news of your health."

Constant's bad health seems to have been caused by the paroxysm of despair that resulted from his unrequited passion for Mme. Récamier. He wrote her at this time: "I hope to be able to go to see you to-morrow, or rather, I am sure of it unless an unforeseen accident happens; for if I were ill I should go just the same; I suffered too much yesterday for not having gone. I begin to believe, besides, that my indisposition will not be acute." And elsewhere he wrote her: "It is possible that a sort of physical weakness contributes to the discouragement I feel. After having suffered much, I begin to feel that pain exhausts. I astonish those who see me by an appearance of illness, that I do not, unfortunately, believe yet a presage of repose." [1]

[1] Letter from Benjamin Constant to Mme. Récamier, by the author of *Souvenirs de Mme. Recamier*, page 213, Paris, Calmann-Levy.

Letter from Mme. de Staël to Benjamin Constant

"COPPET, 13th September [1815].

"I lead such a cruel life, always uneasy about the health of the person . . . [illegible] all my happiness lives, that I have sometimes moments of real despair. Believe me, politics are nothing beside the things that affect the heart. But let us leave that; it is like the term of existence: God alone knows what it is. An Englishman, an intelligent man, whom I saw the day before yesterday, told me that he had read nothing that seemed to him so fine as your last work on political principles, and that the English Constitution was nowhere else so well represented. If, then, circumstances should take you to England, and you should wish to write from there some facts with reflections, I think that you would have great influence; talent quickly effaces what is inconsiderate but not culpable. In this country, also, you would do very well. I believe I have written you that the present Landammann

Pidou,[1] who is really a man of very cultured intellect, spoke to me of your writings with much enthusiasm.

"I cannot tell you about Mme. Constant with certainty, but I have been assured that she was in Germany. Would you be right in bringing her to Paris if her relations do not remain there?

"It seems to me that the Chambers are not composed in a way to propagate liberal ideas, but one must see. What I wish is that my affairs, and the marriage to follow, were terminated. Victor and my son will join me in Italy as soon as they shall have . . . [illegible]. Write to me here always, until I give you another address.

"I have received two letters from the Emperor Alexander[2] in reply to mine, one of which is really superb. Such firm ideas of liberty in the head of such a man are a miracle. What I cannot conceive is why they do not get more good for France from

[1] See note, page 228

[2] The Emperor Alexander I of Russia.

it. What a state the Midi is in! and how calmly they take it. Party spirit has the same effect on all men.

"Sismondi[1] is here, ill and sad to a pitiful degree. He had too much fear of unkindness to expose himself thus. I received him in my house, and Maujet, in his paper at Berne, the most impertinent of all, did not fail to say so. But what would friendship be, if one did not find it in misfortune? Besides, in political affairs I always find that there are but the . . . [illegible] with whom one can count.

"Let me know what you think of the future.

"Adieu, till spring."

Constant was not exiled, but he did not feel himself to be on very solid ground, and thought it prudent to keep at a distance from the political arena. His want of success with Mme. Récamier, which the mystic consolations of Mme. de Krüdner had only succeeded

[1] See note, page 233

in rendering a little less sharp, had also, perhaps, suggested absence to him as a last remedy for his wound. He started for Belgium, where his wife, who had spent all the summer in Germany with her relations, was to rejoin him. Political disturbances had rendered communications and journeys almost impossible. The roads were encumbered and destroyed by the passage of armies, and, more than all, brigandage on the highroads was more than ever the order of the day.

Mme. Constant, as one sees from certain letters from her husband to his relations, was distressed at not being able to rejoin her dear Benjamin, and the manner in which he expresses himself, everywhere and always, about her is not without its comic side. It is the language of a spoiled child, of a young man who feels crushed by the excellence, the kindness, the indulgence of his mother. "I have a kind letter from my wife which encourages me; I shall rejoice at having her again"[1]; or, "I received, by an

[1] *Journal Intime.*

opportunity, an angelic letter from my wife, before the one that you sent me. She wanted to leave Berlin without a passport, and be brought to me here, from post to post." [1]

Mme. Constant having arrived, they could not decide at once whether to go to England, or return to Paris. This second alternative must have appealed to Benjamin, but his position, which had been roughly shaken twice in the same year, made him prefer England, where, however, he went also with a certain fear, not knowing how his wife would be received. He certainly exaggerated the importance of his wife's past in London society; that is to say, of the double divorce that had preluded her marriage to him. He feared that the protection of Queen Caroline, who was then herself in a very unhappy position, would not be sufficient to overcome the prejudices of English society, and that she would be received without much effusion. The Queen was a Princess of

[1] Letter from Benjamin Constant to Rosalie. J. H. Menos.

Brunswick, where she had formerly known Mme. Constant as a young girl, and later as Baronne de Marenholtz.

Constant's fear came in a great measure, certainly, from the acute sensibility that was such a salient feature of his character. But, generally speaking, people were not very rigorous at this period, and since the Marenholtz family had not fallen into the common error of throwing mud at, and covering with ignominy, her who had once borne their name—the son of her first marriage having, on the contrary, divided his time between her house and his father's, and the whole family having remained attached to her,—her past adventures had no ill effect on her present situation. Besides, her position as Comtesse Hardenberg was excellent, and Constant had many friends in aristocratic English circles, who admired him as a distinguished politician and celebrated orator.

A few rare Puritans, perhaps, showed a little reserve, but they were the exception,

and if Mme. de Constant did not prolong her stay in England, it must be attributed to Benjamin's haste to return to the political arena, and to the detestable climate of London, which did not at all agree with her health. The numerous instances of kindness shown by so many of the English, who in going through Paris frequented Mme. de Constant's house in later days, the letters and invitations signed by the first names in England that were found among her papers, are so many proofs that Benjamin Constant's fears were without foundation

In February, Constant wrote from England to Mme. Récamier[1]:

"It is not that your advice is not good, and that I am not disposed to follow it, if I can believe it will help me in any way. I am the more disposed that I detest this country. Invitations without cordiality, curiosity without interest, enormous atsemblies without conversation, and what

[1] Published by the author of *Souvenirs of Mme. Récamier*.

is more painful than the boredom, the feeling that all parties are equally our enemies and France's,—all this makes this visit insupportable to me. You can well imagine, then, that if France is not closed to me, I have no desire to close it! I have no recent news of Mme. de Staël; she wrote me in a fit of discouragement, and I did wrong in not answering her. I have no strength for anything, and also my health is not good. This climate is frightful in winter. Mme. de Constant does not bear it any better than I. She would be very happy to be in France, if she thought I would be in peace there. It is not possible to be better."

This letter seems to show clearly the reasons for Constant's leaving England. Mme. Récamier's advice would seem to have coincided with Mme. de Staël's wishes, and was perhaps inspired by her; and it is probable that the "*bel ange*" kept her informed of Constant's movements, for their friendship never cooled, and Mme. Récamier was certainly to be praised for this. Rarely.

indeed, does a woman preserve a friendship for one who, in spite of herself, has eclipsed her with her lover. It was not, then, in the least because Mme. de Constant's position left something to be desired—as some biographers have been pleased to say—that they left England, and it can only be a deduction drawn probably from two sentences in the *Journal Intime*. Constant, as we have just said, easily imagined a want of respect when nothing of the sort was intended.

While the Constants were in England Mme. de Staël prepared for her second sojourn in Italy, rendered necessary by M. de Rocca's broken health. Schlegel and her daughter accompanied them. Her son Auguste, her future son-in-law, Victor de Broglie, and the latter's step-father, the Comte d'Argenson, joined them shortly before Albertine's marriage. Mme. de Staël did not go from Coppet to Paris before her departure, as she had thought she would be obliged to, for the final liquidation of her money matters with the government. Her son's presence was sufficient.

From the following letter it appears that she did not yet know that Constant had left Paris for England. Constant, in each of the governments, had worked to secure the repayment to Mme. de Staël of the money that Necker had lent to France. The thing was done at last. The Bourbons had no fear of Mme. de Staël's influence. Besides, they occupied themselves very little at all times with what could be useful or injurious to their cause. On the other hand, Mme. de Staël at this time advocated, rather, the rallying to their cause. Napoleon had retained her millions on purpose, for he believed he thus held a weapon against her. In 1799, when he became First Consul, he offered them to her, hoping thus to attach her to him. He made his brother Joseph ask her what she required of him, and she was told that he was disposed to grant the reimbursement. She replied [1]: "Mon Dieu, it is not a question of what I want, but of what I think." And later on, when one of

[1] Lady Blennerhasset's *Mme. de Staël.*

Napoleon's ministers gave her to understand that the Emperor would have the money repaid to her, provided she would declare herself to be attached to him, with her habitual imprudence she made the mocking reply[1]: "I knew that it was needful to prove that one was alive in order to collect one's interest, but I did not know that a declaration of love was also necessary!"

Letter from Albertine de Staël to Benjamin Constant

"LAUSANNE, 25th October [1815].

"I do not want to leave Switzerland without bidding you good-bye, although you no longer give us signs of life. We start for Italy to-morrow. We leave our affairs in rather a sad state, for, really, nothing advances; one must hear the same phrases, and take the same steps, as last year. We are going to be cut off from almost all news in Italy, and perhaps when we return everything will be changed. I would like

[1] Lady Blennerhasset's *Mme. de Staël.*

to know what you are doing, on what you decide. You forget me, surely, but it is not in your power to keep me from thinking of you, from regretting the time when we lived together, and from often telling myself that perhaps I shall never have a sweeter. You have so disturbed the existence of those who have known you intimately, that even when the ties are broken they are deeply interested in all that concerns you. Your dear relations, whom you loved so much formerly, are the most violent against France. I had a dispute with your cousin Mme. D'Arlens, who shakes her little old head with extraordinary vehemence. However, I like Lausanne. One feels that people of intellect have been here, and that leaves a certain trace, even though the inhabitants themselves have but little.

"You can easily guess that I am very French, and that outside a certain point on which it would amuse me much to hear you speak, we are in perfect accord. My mother will perhaps find herself obliged to return

from Milan, on business. I wish I could believe that Paris will then be less full of people than it is to-day.

"Adieu. If you will you can give a letter for me to Auguste." [1]

Continuation by Mme. de Staël

"I have not received a line from you for a month, and yet we have needed to know through you what we must do for our liquidation, if we must decide to sell; but, since you have known from me that I had come to the suit on which I had the legal approbation of Doctor Secretan,[2] one would say that you have had nothing more to tell me. One must, however, be actuated by other than wrong principles.

"I hear that you often see Mme. de Krüdner. I adore her sovereign, and I hope that you talk to her of liberty and that she loves it. I have received a letter from the

[1] Her brother.

[2] The most celebrated lawyer of the Canton of Vaud; he belonged to an old family of Lausanne.

Emperor Alexander [1] that my father would have signed; I can say nothing further. Adieu. I shall go to Paris, perhaps in six weeks."

Before settling, on account of Rocca, in the climate of Pisa, one of the mildest in central Italy, Mme. de Staël stopped at Florence to see her friends again, above all the Duchesse d'Albany, *née* Comtesse Stolberg,[2] who lived in the Via Guio Capponi in the old palace now San Clemente. What celebrities have passed under the old portico to salute the friend of Alfieri!

In December, 1815, Mme. de Staël was the star of the matinées of the Comtesse d'Albany, and one cannot repress a smile on reading some of the notes by which this great lady invited her worthy friends to come and present their homage to the great Frenchwoman. One is astonished at the very slight grace, amounting almost to a lack of

[1] The Emperor of Russia.
[2] Morganatic wife of the last Stuart.

savoir-vivre.[1] She was, indeed, one of those women to whom her friends itch to write volumes of letters, without one's being able, nowadays, to understand in what her charm consisted; certainly it was not in her banal replies. The Chevalier de Sobiratz, one of her most assiduous correspondents, one of those also who would not for the world lose the opportunity of giving a little dig, wrote in reply to a letter in which she announced the presence of Mme. de Staël: "I regret most sincerely not having been able sometimes to make a third in the agreeable conversations you must have had with Mme. de Staël. I like to believe that she now knows more than Corinne of Italy, and as to France, as Mme. de Staël's imagination does not injuriously affect judgment, I can easily guess her opinion. The Sibyl of Coppet invokes only the anchor of constitutions in political storms; it is a family failing, or rather a

[1] See the unedited letter of the Comtesse d'Albany to the historian Miccali, in the collection of M. Miccali, Milan.

continuation of the family intellect. This lady has inherited benefices with burdens."

He was not the only one to be witty at Mme. de Staël's expense. A "*pasquillo*" appeared about her, in which she was called "una pitonessa di 50 anni," which greatly enraged her, and for which Schlegel and M. de Broglie wished to fight duels with half Florence; but on second thoughts they wisely avoided them.

We have found in the collection of autographs called "Frullani," in the Ricardiana library,[1] a letter from Mme. de Staël which shows that she was so pleased with Florence that she not only bought the old Château de Gaville near Fiesole, but that she also wished to buy the beautiful Villa de Scandicci, one hour from Florence. Did Mme. de Staël ever occupy Gaville? This little château has been described by Dante, who speaks of it apropos of the murder of Francesco Guercio de Cavalcanti, whom he puts between five Florentine malefactors (in the seventh circle

[1] Of Florence.

of hell),—"l'altro era quel che tu Gaville piagni," for a large number of its inhabitants were massacred in vengeance.

After Mme. de Staël's second journey to Tuscany, there is sometimes seen on the envelope of her letters a seal with the Medician balls—a souvenir which she evidently took back from Florence.

"PISA, 14th January [1816].

"My address is Florence, Tuscany, care of MM. Donat and Orsi.

"I have had news of you continually; it would be impossible for me to ignore your fate. You will do well in going to England; you will forget party spirit in France, but think well, nevertheless, before closing its doors to you by a book; imagination stops before the irreparable. I have at last obtained the dispensation from Rome, and have sent it to be legalized in Paris. Victor de Broglie and my son will bring it back, and the marriage must take place in Florence, where we shall have a Protestant minister. There my plans end, for rumours of plague

in the south of Italy still give me occasion to fear exposing M. de Rocca to quarantine more than to the disease. In any case we all wish to be reunited at Coppet in June. There, *the skies of our saint are spread above us.* I have ordered the statue of my father from Tieck [1] at Carrara, and I will place it on the great staircase at Coppet, until they come to take it from me to put up in the Hôtel de Ville.

"That will be when there is liberty in France, and as there will be liberty, it will be. Bonaparte was the real enemy of liberty in the world; it is most unfortunate that he did not die at Fontainebleau; we should then be advancing instead of retreating. What a spectacle Italy is! I

[1] Friedrich Tieck, born in 1776 at Berlin; a brother of the writer, a friend of the Schlegel brothers, and through them a protégé of Mme. de Staël. He was a well-known sculptor, and an imitator of Greek art. Many of his works are in the Berlin Museum. He made many busts, among them one of Goethe. In 1809 Bonstettin wrote to Friederike Brun: "Tieck is to arrive; nothing is droller than to hear them speak of this great artist" (at Coppet); "if one believes them, Canova and Thorwaldsen are nothing beside him."

no longer recognise her, for havoc has swallowed up the ruins. If you are in England I shall see you. If I live, I must marry my son to a beautiful, rich, and amiable English girl. They would make, after me, a fine dwelling place of Coppet, where the name of my father would preside. The nearer I approach my own end, the more I feel his hand stretching over me. If, as I hope, M. de Rocca recovers, I shall be able to say I am happier now than I have ever been."

(A piece of the letter is missing here).

"I am much moved at Albertine's marriage, but I am very pleased. Victor is conscious of a quality in his soul from which his mind will never divorce him. Let me have news of you. Come near us when you can, and have faith in honest people; you will always find them when you look for them."

23d February, Pisa, 1816.

"I leave my daughter to announce her marriage. Her feelings for you are sincere

and I have never tried to lessen them. It is for her, then, to speak to you. By God's grace she is happy, and I congratulate myself more every day on having united her to a man of fine character. I wish you all the happiness you can keep. As for me, mine depends on Albertine's future, and on the restoration to health of my friend. If the other wishes are granted it will be luxury. Let us know your plans, and if England suits you."

The continuation is by Albertine.

"My mother is right in saying that my feelings for you are not diminished. All the great emotions of my life make me wish to think of you and speak to you. I bless God for the choice I have made. My admiration for Victor's character increases daily. This feeling of perfect confidence in the nobility of soul of the man one marries is a great happiness. I hope, for my part, never to be unworthy of him, and we shall be able to complete each other mutually. His heart

is so pure that even though he is not so religious as I would wish, it seems impossible to me that the protection of God should not descend on him, for there is only a misunderstanding of words between him and perfect belief. You see that I speak of myself to you, confident of not boring you.

"Send us news of yourself in care of Messrs. Donati and Orsi, at Florence. We are going there to-morrow; we shall spend three months there and then return to Switzerland. Good-bye, dear friend. What a sad combination of circumstances was necessary to prevent you from being present at my wedding. I would not have believed it six years ago! But it does not matter; love me still, and perhaps we shall understand each other once in this world. Victor wishes to be remembered to you; he is really most tenderly attached to you."

In March, 1816, Constant wrote to his confidante (Mme. Récamier): "I hear nothing from Mme. de Staël although I have

written to her; my letter was perhaps lost. I know that Albertine is married and hope she is happy. Her husband is an excellent man, and I do not believe that as she has been brought up, she has an excessive need of demonstrative feeling. Mme. de Staël, by the excess and contradictions of her own enthusiasm, has brought her children to perfect reasonableness. I have at the bottom of my heart, with my affection, a sort of anger against her, similar to that of the Irishman who accused a woman of having changed him at nurse."

Albertine's marriage was celebrated at Pisa and at the French Consulate at Leghorn, on the 15th and 20th February, according to the Catholic ritual for the Duke, and the Protestant for Mlle. de Staël. Mme. Récamier was the first person to whom Mme. de Staël wished to write on leaving the nuptial ceremony. She speaks with emotion of this event to the friend whose devotion was always associated with her joys and her sorrows, and whose charming char-

acter had succeeded in turning what would have been a stumbling-block with any one else—her intimacy with Constant—into a new tie with her old friend. "I will write to you on Tuesday, on leaving the ceremony. And can I be moved without your image appearing to me?"

They waited for a pleasant season to return to Coppet; towards the first days of June they started, the journey being made, by slow stages, by way of Savoy and Mont Cenis.

"FLORENCE, 30th May, 1816.[1]

"We are on the point of leaving Florence where we have heard of you continually, although you did not write to us. Now that we wish to settle at Coppet, send us a line or two about your plans, or absence of plans, for perhaps you are so well pleased with England that you would like to stay there. Sooner or later I will see you again, but meanwhile my son will go there in the autumn on his way to America. I think of

[1] Letter published by A. Strodtmann, *Dichterprofile*.

staying at Coppet until I return to Paris. I have reason to hope that M. Rocca's health, which, thank God, is greatly improved, will allow me to spend the winter in this dangerous country. But one must see and decide. I still intend to go afterwards to Greece to write, before I die, a last work that will reveal what abilities I believe I still have in me.[1] However, my health is failing, and still more so my interest in a life which will henceforth be but brief; but I am now attached to it, for it is happy, and I greatly regret the time that unhappiness robbed me of. But, after all, who can account for all his days to the Giver of this marvellous gift!

"We thought we recognised you in an article in the *Edinburgh Review* entitled, 'Extraits de Lettres de France du Mois de Février.' Let me know if we are right. It seems difficult to have such a suspicion without foundation. You often see Miss Berry and Lady Dorey, both of whom I like

[1] "Richard Cœur de Lion," the poem she intended to write.

very much. I beg you to tell them that I think of staying at Coppet until September and then in Paris, and that I should like to know their plans, so as to meet them. Italy is an agreeable place to stay in since the English have travelled there; one enjoys their society and the sun at the same time, a rare combination. We must leave it, however, for one is still less settled here than elsewhere, but one regrets this existence, without responsibility, without hope, and without fear that leads us to death, as each one arrives in the end, sustained only by the feelings of one's heart.

"I leave my daughter to continue this letter; send us a reply."

Continuation by Albertine, Duchesse de Broglie

"People talk to us a great deal of you; they say you are having great success.

"I wish very much that Paris were London, and that one had only London society to fear, for it is a place where one is judged only by what one is at the bottom of one's heart.

But I have the feeling of going to spend the winter among enemies.

"Italy begins to be very beautiful and very mild. This climate has just the contrary effect of that of England; it makes you happy without any reason, just as the other makes you sad.

"Victor greets you warmly. I believe that you no longer think of me, and you are wrong, for it would need very little to return me the love I feel for you; but you have forgotten everything!"

Letter from Albertine, Duchesse de Broglie, to Benj. Constant

"COPPET, 3d July, 1816.

"I received your letter on my arrival, dear friend, and I thank you really very much. You are kind to respond to my friendship, although I have very often thought that you had forgotten me.

"We have received your novel, that every one thinks very witty, but I did not feel myself much in sympathy with the hero.

I have not yet suffered sufficiently from the misfortune of being loved too well, to sympathise with his miseries. I confess to you that I felt out of temper on reading it, but perhaps those who are not your friends will not have that feeling.

"My impression is in no way a judgment of the work, for it is purely individual. The famous Lord Byron is here. He interests the Canton very much, but we have not seen him. He is also, according to his system, showing his character in a wrong light. I begin to think it is better to have a good opinion of oneself.

"I do not yet know where we shall see each other again. Perhaps we shall go to England, but only in a year or two, and then, perhaps, you will no longer be there. France is not very tempting but we shall have to spend some time there.

"I am only on terms of simple politeness with Victor's family,[1] but I do not desire

[1] Her husband's.

anything else. I am far from saying the same thing of the other part of the family. M. d'Argenson,[1] who has come to spend several days here, has already gained a great hold on me. There is something passionate and yet contained about him that lends him great charm.

"Victor loves you much, and I also, but for that I must believe that Adolphe is not wholly you, although, unfortunately, there are points of resemblance.

"I send you a letter from my mother; we do not know any news."

Adolphe was published in England that year. Constant wrote on this subject to his cousin Rosalie[2]: "I only published it to avoid having to read it in society, as I did in France fifty times. As some English people had heard it in Paris, they asked me for it in London, and after having given it four times in one week, I thought it better

[1] Her father-in-law.

[2] *Lettres de Benj. Constant à sa Famille.* J. H. Menos.

for the others to take the trouble to read it themselves."

The first reading of *Adolphe* took place at Mme. Récamier's during the Hundred Days, and the Duc de Broglie gives a description of it in his souvenirs:

"There were twelve or fifteen present. The reading had lasted nearly three hours. The author was tired. As he approached the dénouement, his emotion increased, and his fatigue excited his emotion. At the end he could no longer contain it; he burst into sobs. The whole party, already much moved, caught the infection. There were nothing but sobs and groans; then, by a psychologic reversion, which is not rare, so say the doctors, the now convulsive sobs changed to bursts of nervous, uncontrollable laughter, so much so that any one who had entered at that moment and surprised the author and his auditors would have been at a loss to know what to think of it, or to explain the effect by the cause."

Constant, for a time, feared what Mme.

de Staël would say of the publication of *Adolphe*, and although the circumstances did not resemble those of the episode with Notre Dame de Coppet, there were then—there are still—many people who said that the author had intended to depict their liaison. Mme. de Staël does not seem to have shared this opinion. She was not at all offended at the publication. Had she been, she would certainly not have hesitated in her well merited reproaches to Constant; and she was much too violent to spare him through any feeling of prudence.

For the last time the habitués of Coppet were reunited there for the summer, and Lord Byron increased the brilliance of the society by his presence. In spite of his literary triumphs he was exceedingly unpopular in ultra-respectable English society at this period, on account of his private life, and this rendered a sojourn abroad preferable to life in England. This summer he was living on the shores of Lake Leman. There are many pleasant passages about Mme. de

Staël in his letters. She showed him her usual kind hospitality. He was grateful for it and wrote his impressions to several people.[1] "I owe Notre Dame de Coppet a great debt on account of her kindness, and amiability, and I like her now, as much as I liked her work, of which I have always been a great admirer. Mme. de Staël is a woman of great kindness of heart, and intelligent in the main, but spoiled by a desire to be—I do not know what. In her own house she is amiable, in any other you wish her far away, and at home again." On July 29, 1816, he wrote again that he had been to Coppet, adding[2]:

"Every one there is well but Rocca, who, I regret to say, is in a very bad state of health.[3] Schlegel is in very good vein, and Mme. [de Staël] as brilliant as ever."

[1] *Letters of Lord Byron*, edited by Thomas Moore.

[2] *Ibid*

[3] Rocca was attacked by a mortal illness that compelled him to observe almost complete silence and a most rigorous mode of life. He outlived Mme. de Staël only a short time.

This, then, was the last summer that Mme. de Staël drew to Coppet the cosmopolitan society composed exclusively of persons whose names recall some well-known deed or writing.

In September Constant returned to Paris, and two months later, on December 16th, his great friend also entered its gates for the last time. She was to die there, and Coppet henceforth was to be illustrious only for the remembrance of her life there, and for the sad honour of enclosing her remains, beside those of the father whom she loved so much, and of the mother who, by a last wish in deplorable taste, had crowned an existence of pose and preciosity by desiring to be placed in a large open vessel filled with alcohol.

The winter of 1816–1817 brought Mme.de Staël and Benj. Constant together again for the last time. He signalised his return to Paris as usual by a pamphlet, *Le traité de la Doctrine Politique*, which Mme. de Staël, it seems, had got him to write to refute

Chateaubriand's famous *La Monarchie selon la Charte.* This publication had the success of all his other writings; but a shadow was slowly descending on the lives of the two friends. Mme. de Staël's health, for a long time undermined by her ardent spirit, was seriously impaired. Constant spent his days at the Chamber—often Master of the Tribune—and his nights in writing or in gambling. He had undertaken the task of resuscitating the paper *Le Mercure,* so that it should serve as a medium for spreading his opinions. The enterprise gave him the more trouble in that it was a great success, and that the success clung to it. His eyes were in a very bad condition, and he had money embarrassments that henceforth became chronic.

Mme. de Staël was attacked by a serious malady that ran its course without the most celebrated physicians being able to arrest it. She endured her sufferings heroically, changing almost nothing in her way of living, and seeming to take her usual interest in politics

and literature. She was interested in all parties of the government, receiving her friends as usual, political leaders, and passing foreigners, and thus using her strength to its utmost limits. Towards the end of February, at a party at the Hôtel Décazes, she fainted on the stairs. From that time her condition daily became worse, and her end was seen to be approaching.

M. de Rocca, on March 25, 1817, wrote to the Comtesse d'Albany: "Mme. de Staël has just come through a serious illness; this is the thirtieth day that she has been in bed. She took to it on account of a burning fever, caused by inflammation of the liver. This is only the eighth day on which she has had no fever; she is very weak, but thanks be to God, we are no longer uneasy, and we hope that her convalescence will soon begin."

It was only a lull in the illness that carried her off.

It was then that, beside her sick-bed, Mme. Récamier and Chateaubriand formed their attachment, a few months before the dis-

persal of the intellectual circle that she had gathered round her. During her long hours of wakefulness Mme. de Staël was much occupied with thoughts of religion. She infinitely enjoyed the *Imitation of Christ*, and it seems that she often repeated the Lord's prayer to calm herself. She also had Walter Scott's works read to her, and the fine scene of the death of the young fisherman consoled her in her moments of pain.

Did Mme. de Staël and Benj. Constant see each other often during this last year? Biographers do not tell us, and unfortunately no letters of this last period have been found.

The letter from Mme. Rilliet-Hubert to H. Meister, written on February 14, 1817, seems to see everything a little too rose-coloured. Are we mistaken in thinking that all Mme. de Staël's last letters were written by a weary hand? She is disillusioned—floating, as it were, above all events. "Her house," said Mme. Rilliet-Hubert, "is the liveliest in all Paris, and she influences all she wishes, and all she can, without finding

any opposition. She has a large fortune, her daughter is charming, Rocca passable; but her health is very poor and that worries me. She writes to me often, and wishes to return to Coppet." [1]

A woman like Mme. de Staël could not cease to be interested in politics, but we doubt that she still wished to "influence." For some time her physical sufferings had been severe, and the malady which was to carry her off at a comparatively early age caused her frequent insomnia and an uneasiness that increased daily and necessitated constant changes of position, often obliging her to leave her bed at night and walk up and down her room till dawn. The doctors diagnosed her illness as gradual paralysis, and the only relief to be got was from opiates.

It seems that she wrote and dictated a little before her death. She also received her friends when her condition was endurable.

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[1] *Lettres inédités de Mme. de Staël à Henry Meister*, Paul Usteri et Eugène Ritter, Paris, Librairie Hachette et Cie., Page 242.

The day before she died, she spent some time in the garden, and gave some roses to those about her. On the day of her death she received the Duc d'Orleans with whom she had a long and animated conversation, as well as with Matthieu de Montmorency, her faithful friend. Towards eleven o'clock she fell asleep peacefully, after an evening of painful spasms. Her fear was always "not to see herself die," and her presentiments were realised.

The Duchesse de Broglie had gone to bed, exhausted by her unremitting care. Auguste de Staël and the Duc de Broglie were resting; all danger seemed past for the moment. Mlle. Randal watched at the bedside. She too, seems to have dropped off for a moment, and when she roused herself Mme. de Staël's hand was cold; she was dead.

Schlegel wrote at once to Matthieu de Montmorency[1]: "Monsieur, I am deputed to tell you the sad news. Your illustrious and immortal friend fell asleep for ever this

[1] Lady Blennerhasset's *Mme. de Staël.*

morning at five o'clock. If you come to us, you will find a house filled with mourning and desolation."

Among the letters of Guillaume Schlegel a leaf was found not dated and not signed, which must be from Constant's hand; it reads: "What I hear horrifies me. Is there then no possibility of seeing Mme. de Staël? Others see her; why not I? I cannot describe what I feel. Believe me, the past is a terrible spectre when one trembles for those whom one has caused to suffer. I implore you to send me news, and if it will not harm her, take me to her."

Did Benj. Constant ask in vain to see her? Could Mme. de Staël have refused to receive him? That she had felt nothing but an ardent desire not to be separated from him, many sentences in her letters, even in those written during her last years, prove clearly enough. And yet one cannot put this hypothesis entirely aside.

Illness and weakness make us very cowardly. The instinct of self-preservation is so

strong that it makes us refuse the possibility of experiencing intense joy lest it should kill us, as the same fear of grief closes our mouths when, by a question, we might become possessed of a heart-breaking certainty. It may be also that Mme. de Staël's household prevented Benjamin Constant's seeing her, for fear that his presence would increase her uneasiness. A strange impulse sometimes seizes the members of a family, to keep from a dying person, under vague pretexts, the beloved friend, the one who could never be forgotten, and whose presence would throw a last ray of light on the death agony,—to remove one who is dear, and to afflict the dying with the presence of those who in the past have used the privilege of near relationship only to irritate his nerves.

It gives one a pang to think that excessive care may have contributed to martyrise this dying woman, who had had so many trials during her lifetime; for what is more terrible than to believe oneself neglected and forgotten by one we love? Was Mme.

de Staël deprived by her own will of a joy that might have made her suffering less bitter?—she who had written to Benjamin Constant after her father's death, when she was already saddened by melancholy forebodings, in a letter which resembles a will: "Adieu, dear Benjamin. I hope at least that you will be near me when I die. Alas! I did not close my father's eyes; will you close mine?"

The Duc de Broglie says in his souvenir: "The evening after Mme. de Staël died, I returned to the house of death to pass the night. Benj. Constant came and found me there, and together we watched at the foot of her bed. He was touched to the core, and deeply agitated. After having exhausted personal recollections, and regrets for the past, we devoted ourselves to long hours of serious thought."

For the next few days Benjamin Constant shut himself up, a prey to paroxysms of despair; his nights were spent in gambling more madly than ever.

Never again, after Mme. de Staël's death, was he entirely himself. The greater part of his heart was buried with her. He, more than any other, loved what he had lost. The mild attachment that Mme. de Constant offered him, the strange admiration laid at his feet by another woman whose letters we shall examine later on—nothing could quite distract him. "Oh! if I were but twenty," he would say to this new friend [1]; but we do not believe him. "Ah! if you were what she was," is rather what he whispered to himself!

He fought till his death for the principles of liberty with which his great friend had inspired him. It was like a last tribute that he paid her for the happiness that it had not been in his nature to give to her *with* whom, and *without* whom, he had not been able to live; homage to her who had been his guardian angel, one of those rare beings who know how to say, in love, "Quand méme."

[1] In the correspondence that will be published in a second volume.

In the *Moniteur* of July 16, 1817, we read these laconic lines: "Mme. la Baronne de Staël succumbed yesterday to the painful malady that had for long caused the gravest anxiety to her numerous friends. She was 53 years old."

It remained for Benjamin Constant to write, in this, the foremost journal of France, a biographical article on Mme. de Staël. He did not sign it, but it is among the best that have been written about her, and deserves not to be forgotten.

APPENDIX

Article by Benjamin Constant, from the Moniteur Universelle, of the 27th July, 1817

"At the time that death took Mme. de Staël, many of her friends felt the need of paying a last act of homage to the memory of a woman whose mind, superior as it was, formed the least part of her merit. I hope that others may succeed in the accomplishment of this duty; the more I try to perform the sad task, the more I feel that it is beyond my strength. When I retrace the details of this life, consecrated by turns to winning glory and succouring misfortune, these details present themselves in such numbers, with such vivacity, that, forgetting the work I have imposed on myself, I allow my thoughts to wander over these impressions, which must never again be repeated for her friends on this earth, and hours slip by without my being able to write a line that pleases me, a line that can convey to the hearts

of others a portion of the feeling which, it seems to me, all the world should experience. When I re-read her work, of which I propose to give an analysis, I stop, in spite of myself, at each of those expressions which during her life struck her friends by their eloquence, but of which they liked to turn aside the forebodings that now strike them as terrible prophecies of a realised event. In short, when, by an effort, I succeed in combining a few words that do but imperfect justice to one of her innumerable qualities, a bitter pang seizes me. It was she who should have been told by her friends how much they loved her; they did not sufficiently convince her of it. They feared, for the body that had become so enfeebled, the emotion that her soul perhaps needed. Each one gave her assiduous care, faithful devotion; but they imposed on themselves a law to surround her with distractions, to speak to her on indifferent subjects, and when death deprived us of her, we all remained buried beneath the weight of words that we had forbidden ourselves to say to her.

"To pronounce them now would, to my mind, be a kind of profanation, and they mislead themselves who expect to find in these pages either

continuous details, a regular chain of ideas, or even the complete expression of the feeling with which Mme. de Staël penetrated the hearts of all those whom she admitted to the circle of her intimate affection. Those who believe they owe it to the public can collect the facts which composed her active, animated, and brilliant life; her friends, at present, know only how to concern themselves with her personality. It is for her above all that they write, and what they write can only have value in their eyes in so far as they hope that she would have had an agreeable impression of it, that she would have been satisfied by it, that she would have seen in it a new proof of the attachment she loved to inspire.

"Mme. de Staël's two dominant qualities were affection and pity. She had, like all superior geniuses, a passion for glory; she had, like all high souls, a great love of liberty; but these two feelings, imperious and irresistible when they do not contend with others, gave way instantly when the least circumstance placed them in opposition to the happiness of those whom she loved, or when the sight of a suffering creature reminded her that the world

held something much more sacred for her than the success of a cause, or the triumph of an opinion.

"This disposition was not one to make her happy in the midst of revolutionary outbursts in which her father's political career and his position in France would have forced her to take an interest, even had she not been drawn to it by the energy of her character and the liveliness of her impressions. After each of the ephemeral successes obtained in turns by the divers parties without knowing how to strengthen by justice the power obtained by violence, Mme. de Staël constantly ranged herself on the side of the vanquished, even though she had been separated from them before their defeat.

"I am assured that to bring forth and maintain unanimous regret, one must speak of her only with regard to her private qualities, or literary talent, and pass over in silence all that appertains to the great questions discussed without cessation for twenty-five years. But I have always seen her hold it a point of honour to manifest noble thoughts on these important interests, and I do not think she would approve of a timid silence. I will not remark on it then;

I will only say that it seems to me that one can forgive her for having desired and loved liberty, when one reflects that exiles of all opinions found her more zealous in protecting them in misfortune, than she had been in resisting them during their power. Her home was their refuge, her fortune their resource, her activity their hope. Not only did she give them generous help, not only did she offer them a refuge that her courage rendered safe; she also sacrificed for them the time that was so precious to her, of which each portion served her to prepare new means of glory, and new titles to fame. How many times one has seen her, when the pusillanimity of the neighbouring governments to France made them persecutors, cease the work to which, with reason, she attached great importance, to preserve to fugitives the retreat they had reached with an effort, and from which they were menaced by exile! What hours, what days she gave up to plead their cause! With what eagerness she renounced the successes of an irresistible intellect, to make this intellect serve entirely to defend misfortune! Some of her works bear marks of it, perhaps. It was in the intervals of this active and indefatigable

good work that she composed several of them, interrupted as she was unceasingly by the constant desire to help and console, and one would find, if one knew all her life, in each of the slight inaccuracies of her style, the trace of a good deed. If Mme. de Staël was such to suffering beings, what was she not to those whom friendship had bound to her? How sure they were that her mind would respond to all their thoughts, that her soul would divine theirs! With what deep feeling did she share their slightest emotions! With what graceful flexibility did she enter into their most fugitive impressions! With what ingenious penetration did she develop their vaguest views, and give them their value in their own eyes! That unique and marvellous talent of conversation, that talent which all Powers that meditated injustice always dreaded as an adversary and a judge, seemed then to have been given to her only to clothe intimacy with indefinable magic, and to supply the place in a monotonous retreat of the lively and varied movement of the most animated and brilliant society. Even on leaving her one was sustained for a long while by the charm that she exercised on all who surrounded

her; one believed oneself still conversing with her; one took her all the thoughts that new objects engendered; her friends put off, as it were, part of their feelings and their ideas until they should see her again.

"It was not only in peaceful conditions that Mme. de Staël was the most amiable of women and attentive of friends. In difficult situations she was still most devoted. I call indifferently as witnesses here, all who had a share in her affections. They counted on her as a sort of Providence. If, by any unforeseen ill-luck, one of them lost all his money, he knew where poverty could not reach him; if he had been forced to fly he knew where he would be thanked for having chosen a refuge; if he had found himself thrown into prison, he would have waited with certainty for Mme. de Staël to come and deliver him.

"Among the affections that filled her life, her love for her father has always held the first place. Words seemed to fail her when she wished to express what she felt for him. All her other feelings were modified by this thought. Her attachment for France increased with the thought that it was the country her father had

served, and from the desire of seeing opinion render to M. Necker the justice that was his due; she wished to bring him back to this country, where it seemed to her that his presence must disperse all prejudices and conciliate all minds. After his death the hope of making his memory triumph animated and encouraged her much more than any prospect of personal success. 'L'Histoire de la Vie de M. Necker' was her constant occupation, and in that frightful malady which an inexorable nature seems to have complicated, to exhaust on her all suffering, her constant regret was not having been able to finish the monument that her filial love had flattered itself in erecting.

"I have just read again the introduction that she prefixed to her father's manuscripts. I do not know if I am mistaken, but now that she is no more, these pages seem to me more adequate to obtain appreciation for her, to make her cherished by those even who did not know her, than all the most eloquent or captivating things that she published on other subjects. Her soul and her talent are there painted in their entirety. The keenness of her views, the astonishing variety of her im-

pressions, the warmth of her eloquence, the strength of her reasoning, the truth of her enthusiasm, her love for liberty and justice, her passionate sensibility, the melancholy that often distinguished her even in her purely literary productions—all are here consecrated to throw light on a single hearth, to express a single sentiment, to have one unique thought shared. It is the only time that she treated anything with all the resources of her mind, all the depth of her soul, and without being distracted by any alien idea. This work has not yet, perhaps, been considered from this point of view. Too many different opinions were opposed to it during Mme. de Staël's lifetime. Life is a power against which, as long as it lasts, recollections, rivalries, and interests arm themselves, but when this power has fallen, must not everything be considered in another aspect? And if, as I like to think, the woman who deserved so much glory and did so much good is the object of universal sympathy and unanimous kindliness, I invite those who honour talent, respect loftiness, admire genius, and cherish goodness, to read again to-day the homage written on the tomb of a

father by her whom the tomb now encloses.

"I invite them for themselves, if they would know Mme. de Staël; they will only know her imperfectly in her other works, more imperfectly still by what will be written of her henceforth. Those who feebly regret her will not know how to paint her; those who regret her as she deserves to be regretted, cannot."

THE END.

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